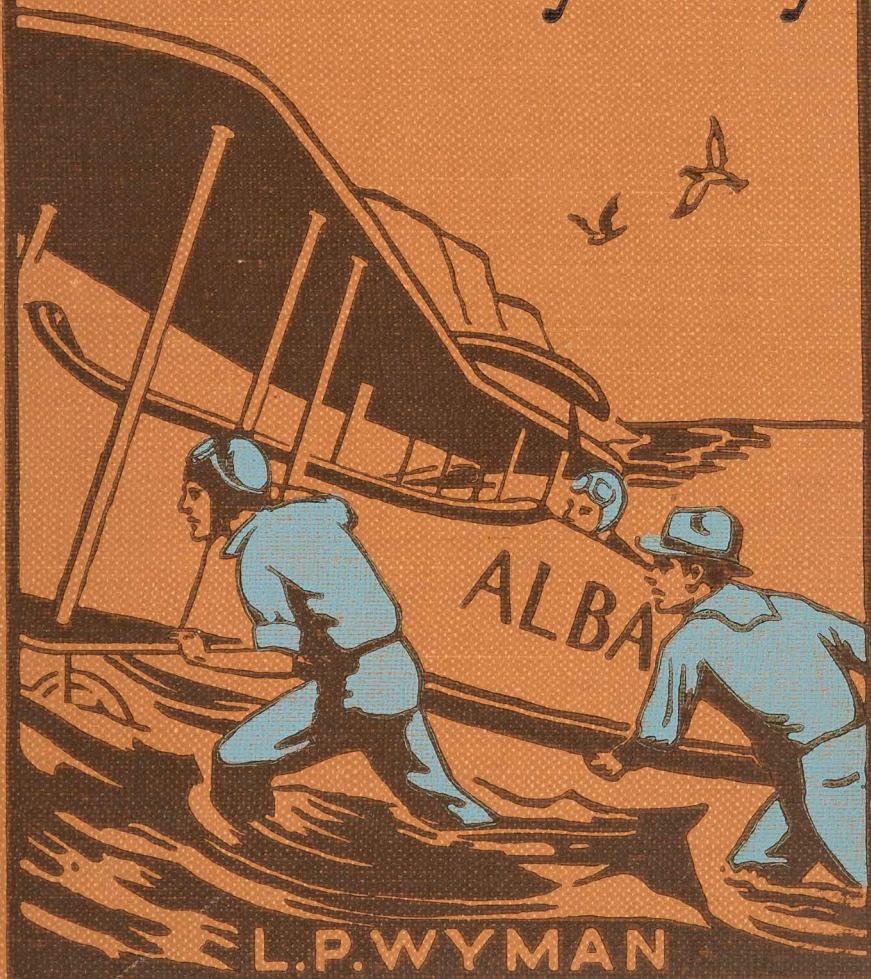
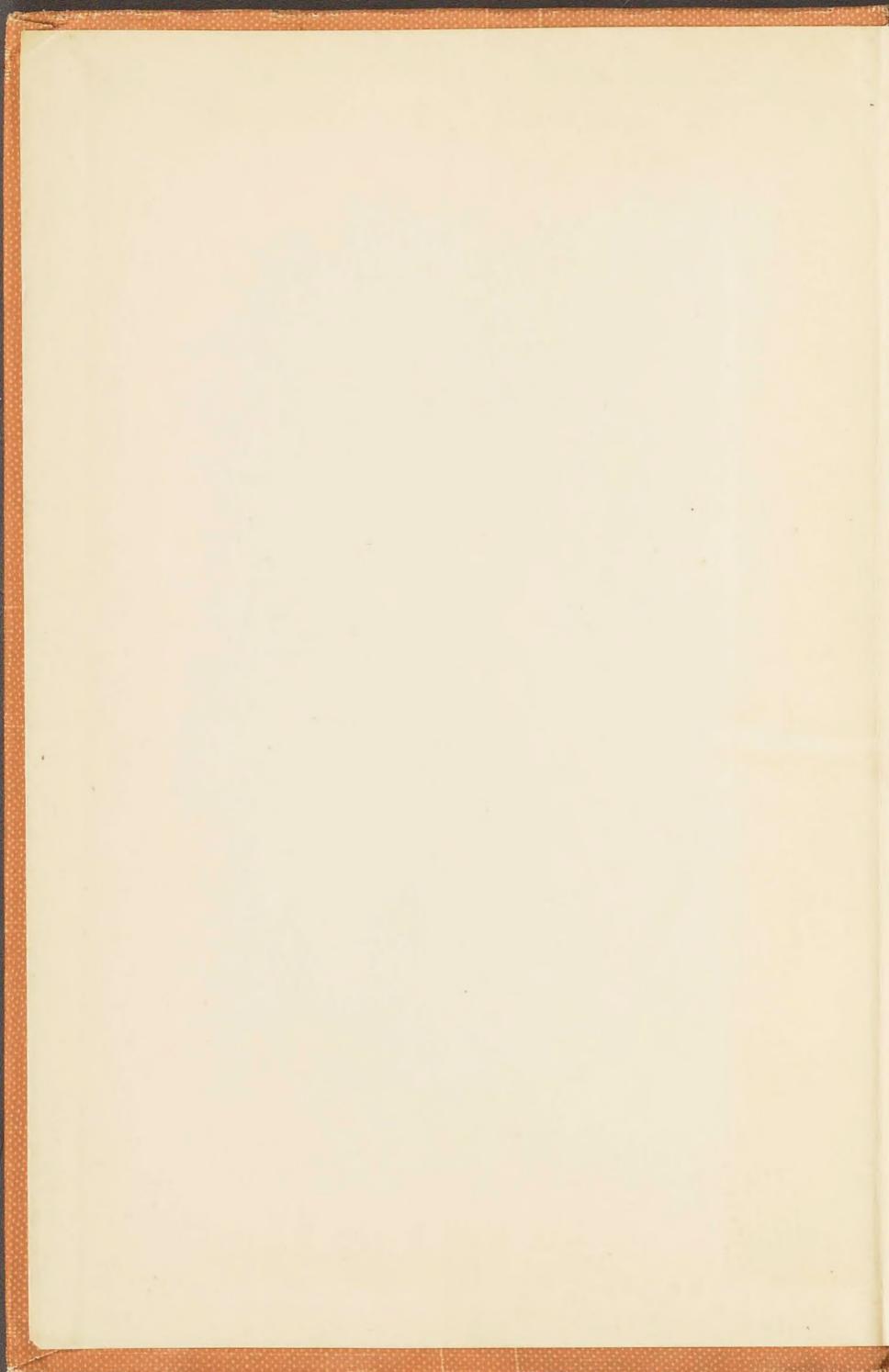


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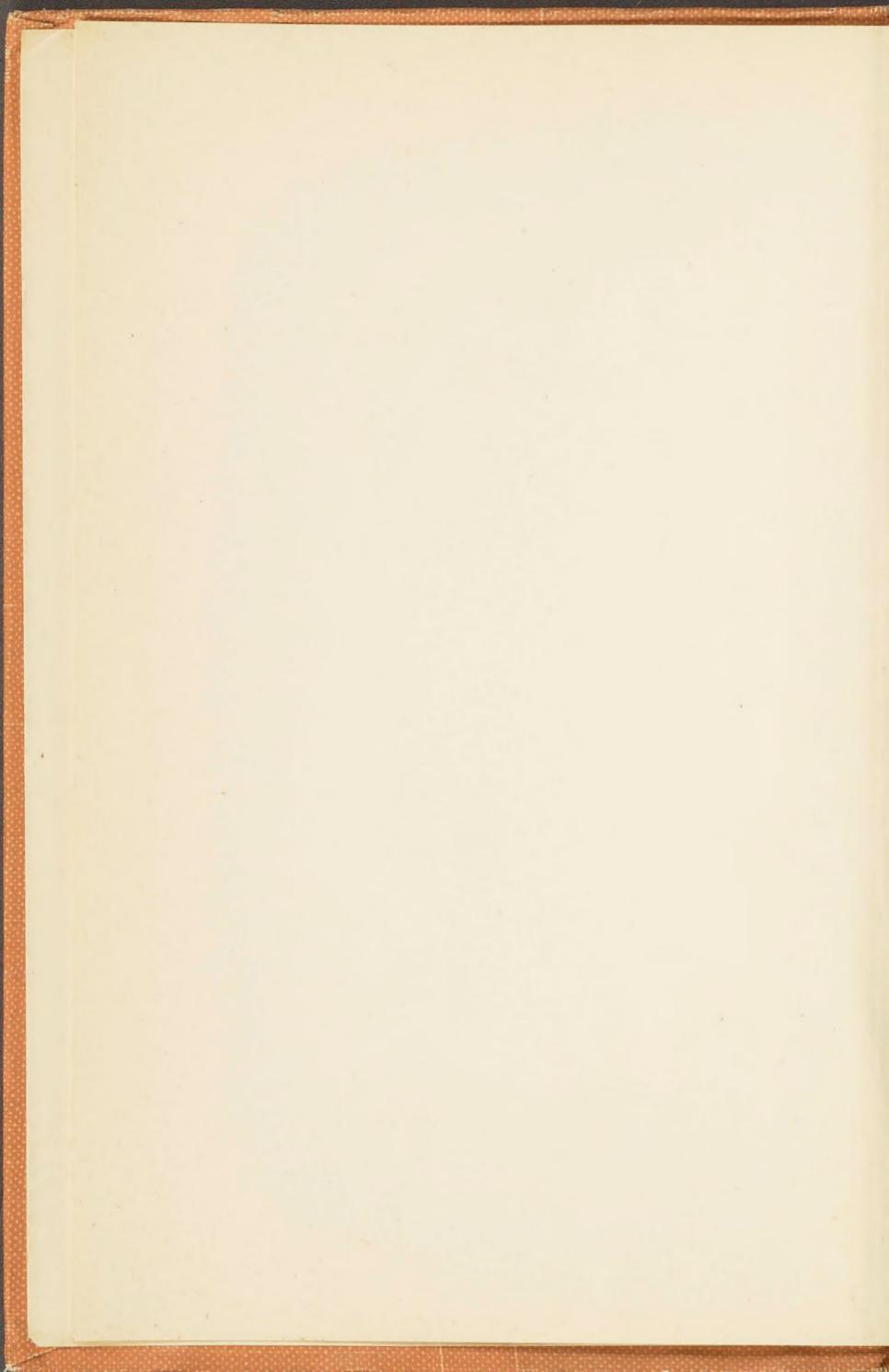
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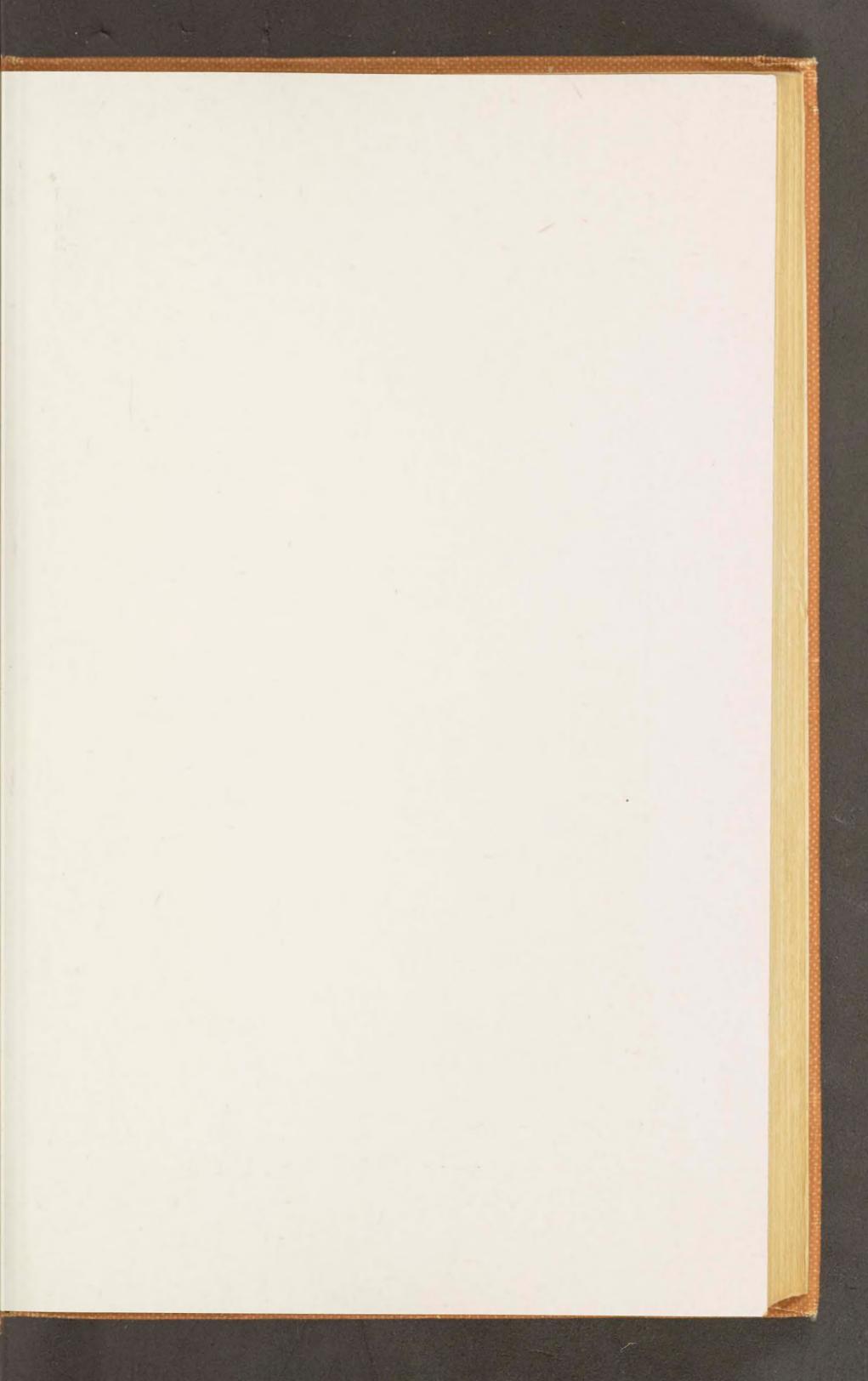


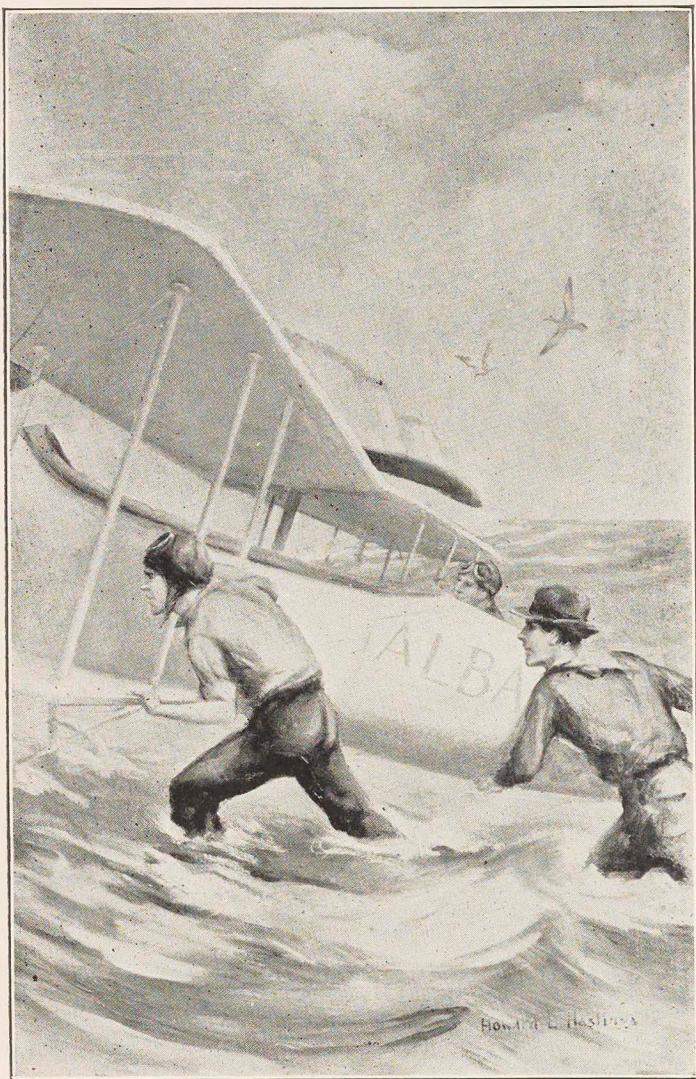
L.P.WYMAN



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The plane was swishing about in a foot or more of water when they reached it.

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(The Hunniwell Boys and the Platinum Mystery)

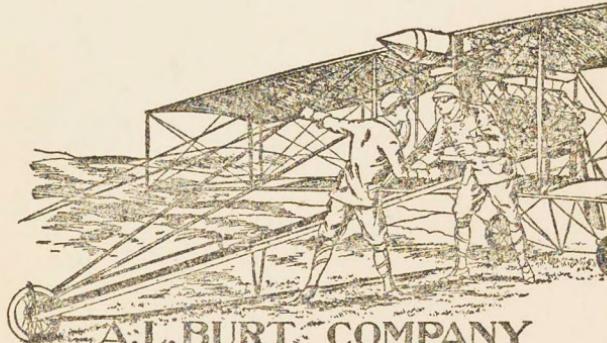
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THE HUNNIWELL BOYS AND THE PLATINUM MYSTERY

By L. P. WYMAN, Ph.D.

AUTHOR OF

"The Hunniwell Boys in the Air," "The Hunniwell Boys' Victory," "The Hunniwell Boys' Longest Flight," "The Hunniwell Boys in the Secret Service," "The Lakewood Boys Series," "The Golden Boys Series," etc.



A. L. BURT COMPANY
NEW YORK

Printed in U. S. A.

The Hunniwell Boys Series

THRILLING AVIATION STORIES
FOR BOYS 12 TO 16 YEARS

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The Hunniwell Boys and the Platinum Mystery

CHAPTER I

A STRANGE PROPOSAL

"HORNED toads and little fishes, but will you look at that baby pull!"

Bill Hunniwell dropped his paddle and grabbed the landing net as he spoke. His brother, Gordon, however, was too busy handling the five ounce rod to make any reply. He had all he could do to keep a taut line on the big square tail as it broke water some sixty feet from the canoe.

But he had handled big fish before and, although he fought it nearly half an hour, he finally succeeded in getting it up within netting distance and in another minute the big fellow lay on the bottom of the canoe too worn out even to flop.

"I'll bet he'll go ten pounds," Bill declared as he looked down at the fish.

"Guess he's the biggest that has come out of Lost

Pond in our time," Gordon added as he too gazed with pride at his catch.

"We'll take him home and have him mounted," Bill declared as he picked up the paddle and turned the canoe toward the cabin.

"The phone's ringing," Gordon said when they were almost in. "Make it snappy or they'll ring off."

A few strong strokes put the light canoe alongside the wharf and Gordon leaped out and raced for the cabin only a few feet away. Bill pulled the canoe up onto the wharf and began taking the rod and fish out. But he had not finished when Gordon returned.

"It was mother calling," he announced. "She says that Mr. Rogers is at the house and wants to see us."

"Rogers? You mean—?"

"Sure, Rogers. R-O-G-E-R-S, our Rogers."

"What's he want?"

"She didn't say, just said he wanted to see us."

"Of course you said we'd be right down as soon as we could shut up the cabin."

"Sure I did. We were going down this afternoon anyhow and it'll save us the trouble of getting dinner. It's only a few minutes after ten and we can make it by dinner time if we hurry."

But it was some task to close up the two cabins as the windows were all fitted with heavy shutters and

the bedding had to be packed away on account of mice and squirrels which, in spite of all they could do, were bound to get in. So it was nearly half past eleven before they were ready to start.

In a small space on the hillside just beyond the cabin rested an airplane with the name "Albatross" in large letters on both sides. One would have said that it would be impossible for a plane to take off in that small space and, for an ordinary plane it would have been correct. But this was no ordinary plane. It carried no heavy gasoline engine with its heavy load of fuel, but was driven by a light but powerful electric motor which received its power from a new type of storage battery. The latter was very small consisting only of a copper cylinder some eight inches long by an inch and a half or two inches in diameter. The cell was the invention of Bob and Jack Golden and a number of them had been loaned to the Hunniwell boys while the Goldens were abroad.

The extreme lightness of the plane had suggested to them the possibility of lifting it vertically by means of a horizontal propeller driven by a second motor and the idea had proved a complete success. Consequently they were able to land and take off in a space barely large enough to hold the plane.

"You got the fish?" Bill asked as he slipped a cell in place.

"I put it in the box under your seat," Gordon told him.

"Sure everything's all right?"

"Sure. I even put out the cat."

"Well, we want to leave things right because something tells me that we're going to be busy the rest of the summer and we may not get up here again till next spring.

"But it's only the third week in August."

"I know that, but it's only a month till college opens and Rogers is wanting to see us."

"And he wouldn't be unless he had something he wants us to do."

"Exactly."

Steve Rogers was a member of The United States Secret Service and the boys had the previous summer been of great service to him in convicting the leader of the largest dope selling ring in the history of the service. They knew how busy he was and thus Bill had decided that something of more than passing importance had brought him to Maine.

"Let's go."

Bill pushed over a switch and the horizontal propeller, which they had dubbed, "the elevator," began to revolve. Faster and faster the blade whirled as Bill added notch after notch until, with a slight lurch, the plane lifted from the ground. Slowly it rose in

the air and started in the direction of the pond as Bill set the forward propeller in motion.

"Better make it snappy so cook'll have time to put on a couple extra plates," Gordon told him as the plane skimmed the top of the mountain on the other side of the pond.

"Be there in twenty minutes," Bill promised.

And he kept his word for the noon whistles were blowing just as the Albatross landed in front of the home hangar. Without waiting to push it inside the boys hurried around to the front of the house where they found their guest on the porch talking with Mr. Hunniwell.

"Talk about pleasant surprises," Bill said as they shook hands.

"Hope I haven't disturbed your vacation," Rogers told him.

"Not a bit of it, we were coming out this afternoon anyhow," Bill assured him.

"Caught a ten pounder, Dad," Gordon said with a proud look at his father.

"Tell that to the marines," Mr. Hunniwell laughed.

"Wait a minute and I'll show you," and Gordon darted off to be back in a minute holding the big trout out for their inspection.

"That's no fish," Rogers declared, "That's a whale,

and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it's the very one that swallowed Jonah."

"I didn't know they grew that large in Lost," Mr. Hunniwell added.

"Well, I reckon you'll have to believe it now," Bill told him.

"Unless you're like the man who, the first time he saw a giraffe, declared 'there ain't no such animal,'" Rogers laughed.

"Well, seeing's believing," Mr. Hunniwell assured them. "But there's the dinner bell and we'd better not keep them waiting."

An hour later they were again sitting on the porch with the exception of Mr. Hunniwell who had returned to his office.

"Well," Rogers began as soon as they had sat down, "I suppose you boys are wondering what is up."

"Something like that," Gordon grinned.

"Anything is welcome so long as it brought you up here," Bill added.

"Thanks," Rogers smiled. "Believe me I'm always glad to come here and see you two boys. Don't know of a single other place where I'd rather be. But this time I had a very definite object in coming and when I've told you the story I think you'll agree that it's a queer one."

"Starts in good," Gordon declared.

"But it hasn't started yet," Rogers told him.

"No, but I mean it sounds as though it was going to be good," Gordon explained.

"Well, here goes. In the first place you must know that I was born in the city of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and my parents still live there in the same house. You of course know that Gloucester used to be a famous home port for whalers and for many years my ancestors followed that trade. I believe a man named Rogers is more or less famous for having captured the largest whale ever brought in. That was more than a hundred and fifty years ago but it is a matter of record. It's an old house, the one in which I was born, but they knew how to build in those days and it is still in good shape and the timbers seem as sound as ever.

"I've been home a few days with my wife and yesterday morning it was raining and, having nothing to do, I went up into the attic, where there is a great conglomeration of all sorts of things, and began rummaging about as I like to do. Well, stuck away back in one corner and covered with dust I found a small trunk which must have been there no one knows how many years. Strange why no one ever noticed it before but it was way back in a dark corner, as I said, and I guess no one ever saw it, as

there was a lot of stuff piled in front of it.

"It was locked but the leather had rotted away so that the lock fell out almost as soon as I touched it. It was almost full of papers yellow with age and most of them were newspapers and didn't mean a thing to me except that they were pretty old, most of them being dated back before the Civil War. But, to make a long story short, down at the bottom of the heap I found an old pocket-book and in it was a paper and that paper is what brings me here."

He reached in his pocket and took from it a large and very thin pocket-book which looked to the boys to be very old. From it he drew a sheet of paper which he handled with extreme care and they could see that it was very brittle.

"I've read this about a dozen times and as the writing is barely legible I'll read it aloud to you as it would take you some time to decipher it. It's dated March 20th, 1816."

"What year did you say?" Bill asked as he paused.

"1816," Rogers told him.

"Over one hundred years ago," Gordon gasped.

"I knew you'd be surprised," Rogers smiled.

"It's hardly believable," Bill added.

"And that isn't the hardest part to believe either," Rogers told him as he again bent his gaze on the letter. "Listen.

“I burried Jim yesterday. He was sick only a few days and I did all I could for him but 'twasn't any use. I ain't feeling none too good myself and perhaps I'm going to get what got him. Well, it's all right if I do. I've had a pretty good life but I would like to see the folks at home once more. I've hid the metal we found and there's about a hundred pounds of it. I don't know what it is and maybe it's no good but it's queer stuff and I never saw any like it before. Looks like silver but 'tain't because Jim tried it with some aqua fortis he had and—”

“What's that stuff?” Gordon interrupted.

“You mean aqua fortis?”

“Sure.”

“That's what they used to call nitric acid, it means strong water. It's Latin,” Rogers explained.

“Funny how he happened to have it with him,” Bill declared.

“That's what I thought,” Rogers agreed.

“And it didn't dissolve it a bit,” he continued to read. “Maybe it's some new kind of metal, Jim thought it was but I don't know.”

“There seems to have been a break here but there's another line.

“I see a ship and it's coming this way. Maybe I'll see the folks again after all.”

“Is that all?” Bill asked as he stopped reading.

"That's all except for a map on the other side of the paper which shows where they hid the stuff."

"That stuff was platinum," Bill declared.

"I think you're right," Rogers told him.

"And a hundred pounds," Gordon gasped. "How much would that be worth?"

"About a hundred and forty thousand dollars," Rogers told him.

"Is there any name signed to the letter?" Bill asked.

"It's signed Sol Rogers."

"Then he must have been one of your ancestors," Gordon declared.

"He was," Rogers told them. "He was my grandfather about six times removed. In his day he was a pretty well known whale hunter and, according to the records, he was some man."

"But how do you suppose that letter ever got in that trunk?" Bill asked.

"You know as much about it as I do. He was lost at sea and I don't know whether it was on that voyage or not."

"Probably it wasn't," Gordon said. "If it had been I don't see how that letter ever got ashore."

"I imagine you're right. But take a look at the map and tell me what you make of it."

He spread the paper out on a small table and all three bent over it. It was rather faint but very well drawn and, after a short inspection, Bill said:

"Looks like the Hawaiian Islands to me, and this larger map over on this side seems to be an enlargement of Molokai."

"I think there's little doubt about it," Rogers told them. "The old fellow must have been up on his geography because I've compared it with a modern map and it matches almost perfectly."

"And you think the platinum, or whatever it was, is still there?" Gordon asked.

"That's hard to say. What would you guess?" Rogers smiled.

"Seems to me he'd have taken it with him if he was rescued," Bill gave as his opinion.

"At first thought it would seem so," Rogers said. "But when you come to think of it it doesn't seem so likely, or at least it doesn't to me. In the first place he wasn't sure it was any good and then the ships of that time usually carried a pretty tough crew and he might have been afraid to take it on board. No, I think he left it there hoping to come after it some other time if he found out it was worth it. Probably he took a sample with him."

"And perhaps he went back and got it," Gordon suggested.

"I hardly think so or it would have been mentioned in the family history. I looked and there was no word about it. My candid opinion is that he never got back home."

"Then how did the letter get in that trunk?" Gordon asked.

"Of course I can't answer that," Rogers smiled. "But there are several explanations any one of which is possible."

"Such as what?" Gordon asked.

"Well, for one the letter might have been placed in a tight box of some kind and been washed ashore and someone found it and sent it to his people."

"Sounds pretty far fetched if you ask me," Gordon declared, shaking his head.

"Granted," Rogers smiled. "But it got there some way that's certain."

"No doubt about that," Bill broke in. "But what about it?"

"I'm going to see if I can find it," Rogers told him slowly.

"You are?"

"Of course I fully realize that it's more than likely to be a wild goose chase," Rogers told them, "but I've never been out there and I'm going to have a try at it. That is if I can get

two boys to go with me. I can get a month's leave of absence."

"You mean you want us to go with you?" Gordon asked.

"That was the impression I was hinting at," Rogers smiled.

"Molokai. Isn't that where they send lepers?" Bill asked.

"Yes, there's a leper colony there," Rogers told him. "But you know leprosy isn't contagious."

"Gee, but I'd like to try it," Gordon declared. "How about you, Bill?"

"I'm on."

"Fine. How about your parents? Will they want you to go?"

"Oh they won't object," Gordon assured him.

"But how'll we go?" Bill asked. "I think you told us once that you had promised your wife that you'd never fly again and that let's the Albatross out."

"Ah, but it doesn't," Rogers smiled. "You see, my wife is a pretty good sport and when I told her about this find and explained how safe your plane is she consented to let me go."

"Then we can go in the old bird?"

"You bet. And if we find anything of value we'll divide it three ways."

"No, two ways. You half and Gordon and I the other half," Bill insisted, and neither he nor Gordon would agree to any other plan.

"Oh, well, we probably won't find anything anyway so we won't fight about it," Rogers finally gave up.

CHAPTER II

OFF FOR MOLOKAI

As they had expected it did not take very much urging to gain the consent of their parents although Mr. Hunniwell told them frankly that he had no faith in their hopes. "However," he continued, "you have never been in that part of the world and if you are careful not to take any chances the trip will undoubtedly be a good one and you will enjoy it. But don't be disappointed if you find nothing. That paper is too old to have any value in my opinion."

They had decided to start in a week as it would take them that time to make all their preparations. Or rather Rogers told them it would take him that long as he was obliged to go back to New York and attend to several matters connected with his work. As for Bill and Gordon, they declared that they could be ready to start the next day.

It was arranged that they would pick Rogers up on the flying field on Long Island as he lived not far from there and he left late that afternoon.

"I'll bet we find it just the same," Gordon declared as they watched the train pull out from the station.

"Now you don't want to get your hopes up too high," Bill advised. "To my way of thinking it's a mighty long shot. A hundred years is a mighty long time and the chances are that, even if the letter isn't a fake and he never returned and got the stuff, we'll never be able to find it."

"Well, maybe not, but we'll have a mighty good time hunting for it, let me tell you."

After they had gone to bed that night they took up the conversation again.

"Say, Bill, you don't happen to know how big that island is, do you?" Gordon asked.

"Sure do. Two hundred and sixty-one square miles."

"How do you know?"

"Looked it up, of course."

"And how far is it from San Francisco?"

"Twenty-one hundred miles."

"And all the way over water."

"Sure. There's no bridge there."

"Smarty."

"Well, you asked me."

"Know anything more about it?"

"Not much. There's a leper colony there."

"I knew that."

"Indeed."

"Know how many lepers live there?"

"No."

"Indeed."

"Well, you can't expect me to know everything,"

Bill laughed.

"I don't," Gordon chuckled.

"But I know one thing."

"Indeed."

"And that is I'm going to sleep if you'll let me."

"Far be it from me to keep your mighty intellect working over time. Good night."

"Bon nuit."

Impatient to be off and chafing at the delay the boys put in all the time possible going over the Albatross until Gordon declared that if they did not quit they would wear it all out before they started. "You've oiled that motor about a dozen times in the last two days," he told Bill, "and you know that once in two thousand miles is a plenty."

"And how many times have you greased that main bearing?" Bill retorted.

"Well, I guess all it needs," Gordon laughed.

But at last the day came and they bade farewell to their parents and promised to be careful and take no unnecessary chances for the twentieth time. Rog-

ers was awaiting them when about ten o'clock in the morning the plane settled to the ground.

"Been waiting long?" Bill asked as he leaped from the cockpit and grasped his hand.

"Only about fifteen minutes," Rogers told him. "I've got all my stuff here. Think we can find room for it?"

"I reckon," Gordon assured him. "There's lots of room back of that back seat. What's in that box?" he asked pointing to a wooden box about eighteen inches square.

"That's my laboratory," Rogers told them. "You see," he explained, "we don't want to bring home a hundred pounds of something that's not worth anything. I happen to know a little about Chemistry and I'm taking along enough equipment to be able to make some tests."

"You talk as though you really expected to find it," Bill smiled.

"Of course I do," Rogers told him. "What do you suppose we're going for?"

"Platinum," Gordon answered.

"You said it, son."

All this time they had been busy packing away Rogers' stuff and, as soon as the task was accomplished, they were ready for the start.

As there was no particular hurry they had decided

not to attempt a non-stop flight but to land as soon as it began to get dark and spend the night at a hotel.

"We ought to get pretty near out to Chicago before dark," Gordon declared as he got to his seat beside Bill.

"Easy," Bill told him.

It was a perfect day as they rose in the air. There was a bit of light breeze and even that was in their favor and everything seemed auspicious.

"How quiet it is," Rogers said as Bill started the forward propeller.

"I suppose you miss the noise of the engine," Gordon said.

"I sure do, but it's a happy miss," Rogers laughed.

Bill climbed rapidly until they reached an altitude of a little over a thousand feet and then leveled the plane and increased the speed until they were making a hundred and fifty miles an hour and for some time kept it there.

"There's Lake Erie," Gordon announced about one o'clock, "and I move we eat."

"Looks to me like a shower coming this way," Bill said an hour later.

"I've been watching that cloud for some time," Rogers said, "and I think we're going to hit it."

"Looks like it," Bill agreed, "unless we can go over it."

"How about landing till it passes?" Gordon asked. "I had one experience in a thunder storm and don't exactly hanker for another."

"Just as you say," Bill told him. "But it looks rather low to me and I believe we could go over it without any trouble. What do you say?" he asked turning to Rogers.

"There's no use in taking chances," replied the older man. "But if you think there's no danger, go ahead as far as I'm concerned."

"I really believe it's as safe as it would be to land," Bill declared. "That storm is going to be a pretty good one and it might wreck the plane even on the ground. If you two are willing I'd like to try it."

"Go to it," Gordon declared and Rogers nodded his head in agreement.

So Bill gave the stick a sharp pull and the Albatross turned her nose upward. Up crept the needle of the altimeter until it registered ten thousand feet and still the dark clouds seemed just ahead of them. Then suddenly a thick mist enveloped them and they knew they had entered the cloud. For some time they had heard the distant mumbling of thunder and seen flashes which told them that the storm was

rushing toward them. And now the wind was rapidly increasing in strength and coming directly against them.

"Think we'll make it?" Gordon asked, and there was more than a suspicion of anxiety in his voice.

"I think we're above the center of it," Bill answered as he glanced over the side of the cockpit.

"Still going up?" Rogers asked.

"Yep, still going up," Bill told him.

The flashes of lightning were closer now and the rattling of thunder was almost incessant and Bill's heart sank as he realized he had made a mistake. "I should have landed," he muttered as he gave the stick another pull.

Then, almost as suddenly as they had entered the cloud, the plane burst into bright sunshine.

"Hurrah, we made it," Gordon shouted.

"And just in time if you ask me," Bill returned. "I was beginning to get scared."

"First time I ever was above a thunder storm," Rogers told them as he looked over the side of the cockpit. "Just look at those streaks of lightning. Isn't it a wonderful sight?"

"It sure is," Gordon told him, "But let me tell you it doesn't seem half so wonderful when you're

down there in it. And, believe me, I know what I'm talking about because I've been there."

"It seems kind of lonesome up here when you can't see the ground," Rogers declared a few minutes later.

"We'll be going down pretty soon," Bill told him. "We've pretty nearly passed it."

The sound of the thunder was rapidly decreasing and they could see that the heavy clouds beneath them were thinning out and soon Bill turned the nose of the plane downward.

"Next time I think we'll land if it's all the same to you," Gordon told them as he caught sight of the land. "Terra firma isn't so bad after all when a storm comes up."

"I believe you're right at that," Bill agreed.

It was about seven o'clock when they decided to land for the night. They were approaching what seemed to be a fair sized town, not too large but large enough to have a hotel and a few minutes past the hour they landed just on the outskirts of the village. About a hundred yards away was a house with a large barn and Bill suggested that it looked as though they could run the plane inside if permission were given. So Gordon went up to the house and at his knock a man appeared who readily granted his request.

AND THE PLATINUM MYSTERY 25

"And we can put you up for the night," he added. "You see we take in tourists and supper is all ready. Matter of fact it's about over but I guess there's plenty left."

"That'll be fine," Gordon told him.

Without much trouble they pushed the plane inside the barn, the doors of which happened to be especially wide and, a few minutes later, sat down to a splendid supper.

"What town is this?" Bill asked their host as they started to eat.

"Creston," he told him.

"Indiana?"

"No, Creston, Iowa."

"We sure did make good time then," Gordon declared.

"Funny I didn't hear your plane," the man said.

"No, it isn't," Gordon told him, "because it doesn't make hardly any noise."

"How come?"

"Well, you see, we have an electric motor instead of a gasoline engine," Gordon explained.

"First time I ever heard of that," the man declared.

"And I think ours is the first one of its kind," Gordon told him.

"Think we can make the coast to-morrow?"

Gordon asked as they were getting ready for bed.

"If nothing happens and we get away by five o'clock," Bill told him.

"And we don't run into any more storms," Rogers added.

They had arranged for an early breakfast and it was only a few minutes after five o'clock when they again took the air. The sky was overcast with heavy clouds and there was every prospect that it would rain before the day was much older. And the promise was fulfilled, for within an hour it was raining hard. But inside the cockpit all was cozy and, as there was little or no wind, they did not mind the bad weather.

"Better hit her up pretty lively if you expect to make the coast to-day," Gordon advised.

"We're doing a hundred and fifty," Bill told him.

"Do you really mean it?" Rogers asked.

"Hundred and fifty-two to be exact."

"It doesn't seem possible we are going that fast," Rogers declared.

"That's because the old bird runs with so little fuss," Gordon told him.

"She doesn't make much fuss about it and that's a fact," Rogers agreed.

"Hark."

"What is it?" Bill demanded.

"Plane coming," Gordon told him.

"I hear it now," Bill agreed.

"And, believe me, it's doing some hiking," Rogers added a moment later.

"I see it," Gordon, who was using the glass, declared. "It's coming straight for us."

"Well, thank goodness there's plenty of room to turn out," Bill laughed.

"Mail plane," Gordon announced a moment later.

"Doesn't look as though he saw us at all," Bill declared giving the wheel a slight turn.

"He doesn't hear us, that's one safe bet," Rogers said.

A moment later and the big mail plane rushed by them at a distance of only a few rods and they could not help laughing at the expression on the pilot's face as he caught sight of them, apparently for the first time, when they were directly opposite.

"Bet he goes in with a tale of a ghost plane," Bill chuckled.

"Wouldn't wonder," Rogers laughed.

"He certainly looked as though he was seeing things," Gordon added.

"I suppose twenty years from now planes will be so thick that we'll have to have traffic laws same as

we do now for automobiles," Rogers declared as he watched the plane disappearing in the distance.

"But we'll always have plenty of different levels," Bill said, "and that will help."

"It sure will," Gordon agreed.

"I think I can see the ocean."

It was a little past six o'clock when Rogers made the statement. Gordon had been driving since shortly after noon and Bill was more than half asleep in his seat. The weather had cleared shortly after twelve o'clock and they had all enjoyed immensely the flight over the lofty peaks of the Rockies. The motor had run perfectly and nothing had happened all day to mar the pleasure of the trip and they were all in high spirits.

"Going to land in the big city?" Gordon asked a few minutes later when they were sure that they were nearly to the coast.

"I think Stockton will be better," Bill told him. "It's only a short distance from the coast and it isn't so large."

"Then we ought to be sighting it most any minute now."

"I believe that must be it a bit over to our right," Rogers declared.

"My idea," Bill agreed.

Gordon turned the wheel slightly and in a few minutes they had landed. A number of people had seen the plane as it was settling to the ground and they were almost immediately surrounded by a curious crowd.

"What kind of an outfit is that?" one man, a big burly fellow demanded as he rested one hand on one of the wings.

"It's an areoplane," Bill told him.

"But it didn't make no noise like a plane," the man objected.

"No," Bill said quietly. "You see, it's run by an electric motor instead of a gas engine."

"Can yer beat that," the man declared turning from the plane to the crowd. "Where you fellers from?"

"Maine," Bill told him.

"That's a good bit of a distance from here, I reckon. When did you start?"

"Yesterday morning."

"No kiddin'?"

"Honest injun," Bill smiled.

In spite of the man's roughness he saw that he, as well as the rest of the crowd, was well disposed toward them and he thoroughly enjoyed his surprise. Inquiry at once gave them the information that there was a good hotel only a couple of blocks distant

and willing hands helped them push the plane down the street and into the garage in the rear of the hostelry.

"And so ends the second day," Gordon declared as they made their way toward the dining-room.

CHAPTER III

OVER THE PACIFIC

"WE ought to make it from here in about fifteen hours actual flying time," Bill said as they were getting ready for bed shortly before ten o'clock.

"Then if we leave here at five we should be there about eight," Gordon said.

"But that gives us no leeway in case of trouble," Rogers reminded them.

"And we want to be sure to get there while it is light if we possibly can," Bill advised.

"Then I move that we pull out of here soon after three o'clock," Gordon said. "Of course it'll be dark then but it'll get light before we get very far and we won't mind it and we'll all feel safer."

"Second the motion," Bill agreed.

"Third the motion," Rogers added.

"Which makes it unanimous," Gordon laughed. "Got your course laid out?" he asked turning to Bill.

"I will have it in about a minute," Bill replied

bending over the map he had been studying for the past few minutes.

"Don't make any mistakes," Gordon cautioned him. "If we miss that island we're likely not to see any land for a long, long time."

"And the water out there is mighty wet," Rogers laughed. "By the way, I wonder if the Albatross will float."

"Of course we've never tried it," Bill told him, "But I don't think there's any doubt about it. Back of your seat there's a pretty good-sized air space which we made water tight and you know she's very light and we carry no fuel. Yes, I think I can say she'll float."

"I'm certain of it, but I sure hope she won't have to demonstrate it," Rogers smiled.

He called the office and asked that they be called at half past two. They had already made arrangements with the cook for plenty of food to be packed for them and they were assured that everything would be ready at whatever time they appointed.

"Then I reckon we'd better hit the hay for what sleep we can get which will be only about four hours," Bill said as he finished charting his course.

Ten minutes later the lights were out and all was quiet.

"Gee, but twenty-one hundred miles seems like a good ways when it's all over the water," Gordon declared as he hopped to his seat at a quarter past three the following morning.

"In miles, yes, but in time it isn't so far," Bill told him as he started the elevator. "We'll be there before you know it."

"Oh, I'm not scared or anything like that," Gordon hastened to assure him.

"I never thought you were," Bill smiled.

Dawn was just breaking as they flew over San Francisco and out over The Golden Gate.

"Wish it was lighter so we could see more of it," Bill said.

"We must plan it so that it will be when we come back, it's well worth seeing," Rogers told him.

"And now there's nothing beneath us but drink," Gordon sighed.

"And not very good drink at that," Rogers laughed.

"But there's plenty of it such as it is," Bill declared.

"And then some," Gordon added.

It was a beautiful morning and as the sun came up behind them and threw its rays out over the ocean it was an experience they never forgot. They were flying at an altitude of a little more than a thousand

feet and the ocean stretched out beneath them like an immense mirror.

"No wonder they called it the Pacific if it's always like this," Gordon declared looking over the side of the cockpit.

"But it isn't," Rogers reminded him. "I've been on it a couple of times and once in particular it wasn't so pacific let me tell you."

"Didn't you say you had never been where we're going?" Gordon asked him.

"I never have, but I've been on the Pacific. It's a fairly big pond, you know, and you can go some little distance without banging into those islands."

"Guess you're right at that," Gordon laughed.

An hour later they ate breakfast and found that the cook had put them up a splendid lunch.

"Believe me, that baby knows his vegetables," Gordon declared as he started on his third sandwich.

"Hope he's as good on quantity as he is on quality," Bill sighed.

"That a knock at me?" Gordon demanded.

"Don't be so quick to put the shoe on," Bill laughed. "Is that the ninth or tenth sandwich for you?"

"It's only the third," Gordon flung back. "How many have you had?"

"Why, er—"

"Don't be bashful. How many?"

"Four, not counting this one," Bill acknowledged.

"Then don't talk to me about quantity. I'm only a piker compared with you."

"I guess we've got enough," Rogers told them. "I know something about eating myself and I ordered the eats you know. Anyhow if you find we're going to run short you can throw me overboard."

"Jonah act, eh?" Gordon laughed.

"Well, if I'm not greatly mistaken there's the whale all ready for you," Bill cried pointing ahead.

"Sure's you're born," Gordon shouted.

"And it looks as if it were big enough to do his part all right," Rogers added.

"Let's see how near we can get to him," Gordon suggested. "He's right in our path and we won't lose more than a few minutes at the most."

The whale was, as near as they could judge, about two miles ahead of them when Bill slowed down the motor and, at the same time pulled the stick turning the nose of the plane downward.

"Look at that baby spout water," Gordon cried.

"He'd make a peach of a fire engine," Bill declared.

They were rapidly nearing the whale which seemed

to be idly floating on the surface of the water and so far had apparently not seen them.

"My, but he's a whopper, and will you look at that mouth," Gordon said as they drew nearer. "I'll never doubt the story of Jonah again. That baby could swallow him and the boat besides."

Bill had started the elevator and they were now almost directly over the whale and not more than fifty feet above the water. And still the whale paid not the slightest attention to them.

"Better not get any lower," Rogers said as the plane hung almost motionless over the big animal of the deep. "He might take a notion to wag his tail at us."

Just as he spoke the whale must have either seen or heard them for suddenly there was a mighty commotion in the water and high up in the air swung the tail sending a cloud of spray which sprinkled them liberally. Then he was gone leaving only a mighty swirling of the water below them.

"I'll say your advice was good," Bill said as he started the forward propeller. "If we'd been much lower he'd have caught us."

"He was only playing," Gordon declared. "Cunning little fellow, wasn't he?"

"Maybe he was playing, but I'm afraid he'd make rather a rough playfellow," Rogers laughed.

"How long would you say he was, about two hundred feet?" Gordon asked.

"Two hundred fiddle sticks," Bill scoffed. "They never grow to more than about eighty feet. Isn't that right?" he asked turning to Rogers.

"That's about the limit, I believe," he assured him.

"Well, that may be your experience," Gordon told them, "But, take it from me, that baby was an exception. A hundred and fifty feet and I won't take off an inch."

"Too bad you couldn't measure him," Rogers said.

"Probably he would have if he'd had scales like an ordinary fish," Bill jeered.

"Old stuff," Gordon retorted. "If you can't do better than that you'd better keep still and not try. Noah sprung that one when he was telling the King of Nineveh how big the whale was that swallowed him."

"I suppose you heard him."

"No, I didn't hear him but I heard about it," Gordon laughed.

By this time their speed had crept up to a hundred and fifty miles an hour again and they were all looking for more whales.

"But we'd better not stop again even if we do

see one," Bill declared. "We want to make the island before dark so we can see where to land and whales take time."

"But we got our money's worth that time," Gordon declared.

The weather remained perfect and at noon they ate again until Rogers warned them that half their food was gone and they had better go a bit slow.

"And I had just got well warmed up," Gordon sighed.

"Warmed up indeed," Bill scoffed. "I've been watching you and you've eaten enough for three ordinary men right now."

"You sure can tell 'em when you get started," Gordon retorted.

"Do you boys fight like this all the time?" Rogers laughed.

"You don't know the half of it," Bill told him.

"Is Molokai the first land we're going to see?" Gordon asked a couple hours later.

"If I haven't made any mistake in my reckoning it will be," Bill told him.

"And if you have we may not see land for a week, eh?"

"Something like that."

"Then here's hoping because I'm going to get mighty hungry before then," Gordon declared.

"I'll bet," Bill laughed.

Six o'clock came and they ate once more leaving just enough for a meager breakfast. For the past hour Bill had been watching what looked like a low bank of clouds ahead of them, and as soon as the meal was over, he said:

"I don't just like the looks of the weather ahead there."

"I've been watching it," Rogers told him. "Think it's a storm?"

"Looks like something of the sort to me. What do you say, Gordon?"

"Looks to me more like a fog bank."

"Which is about as bad."

"Worse, if you ask me," Gordon told him.

"We ought to be nearly there I'd say," Rogers declared.

"Let's see, we've been flying nearly fifteen hours at about a hundred and fifty miles an hour. How far is that?"

"Twenty-two hundred and fifty," Gordon told him a moment later.

"Then we ought to be there. I figured it was twenty-two hundred miles from where we started. Wonder if I've gotten off the course."

"If you have it'll be the first time," Gordon told him.

"And the worst time," Bill added. "But I don't believe I have. I've watched the compass mighty close."

"We lost some time playing with the whale," Gordon reminded him.

"Not more than fifteen or twenty minutes I'd say."

"I'd make it half an hour at least," Rogers gave as his opinion. "You slowed down quite a while before we got up to him and it took some time to get going full speed again."

"Well, maybe it was half an hour," Bill agreed, "But, even so, we ought to be sighting it any time now."

"We probably will," Gordon assured him.

But another half hour passed and still there was no sight of land, but it was now quite certain that they were running into a fog.

"No use trying to go over it because we couldn't see through it," Bill told them as the plane became enveloped in the light fog.

"Not so bad if it doesn't get any worse," Gordon said.

"But it's going to," Bill told him.

And he was right for in less than ten minutes it was so thick that they could hardly see a dozen feet ahead. Bill slowed down the motor until they were

making just enough headway to maintain their altitude.

"Only thing to do is to ride it out," he declared.

"Good thing there's no wind," Gordon ventured.

"But if there was a good wind it would probably blow the fog away," Rogers told him.

"That's so, too," Gordon agreed. "Perhaps I'd better whistle for one."

Another half hour passed with no change in the conditions.

"I'm afraid we'll go past it," Bill told them.

"What's the matter with starting the elevator and standing still till the fog clears if it ever does?" Gordon suggested.

"Just what I was thinking of doing," Bill said, and a few minutes later they were practically motionless.

"Keep your eye on the needle," Bill ordered. "We don't want to get any lower."

It took considerable moving of the switch to hold the plane stationary but for more than an hour their altitude did not vary more than a hundred feet. Of course they were unable to tell how fast they were drifting but there was only the slightest of breezes and they knew it could not be much. It certainly was a peculiar sensation to be suspended there be-

twixt sky and water and before long it began to get on their nerves.

"If something doesn't happen before long I know one who's going loco," Gordon declared.

"It isn't very pleasant," Bill told him, "but I can't see that we're in any particular danger."

"It isn't that," Gordon insisted. "It's, it's—well, I don't know what it is but it is all right."

"I feel somewhat that way myself," Rogers acknowledged.

"And I guess I'd better make it unanimous," Bill laughed, but there was not much mirth in the sound.

"How about going straight up and seeing if we can't get out of this stuff?" Gordon asked.

"Wouldn't do a bit of good if we did," Bill told him.

"I know it but it would be doing something."

"All right, just as you say," and Bill pushed over the switch.

They had been floating at an altitude of about eight hundred feet and the needle slowly turned until it registered four thousand and the fog was as thick as ever. And now it was getting dark.

"Think we'd better go any higher?" Bill asked.

"We don't seem to be getting anywhere and that's a fact," Gordon told him. "Guess we better go down again. Somehow I don't feel safe up so high."

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So Bill pulled the switch back and they began to sink. At an altitude of a thousand feet he brought the plane to a stop and said:

"Well, we seem to be about where we were before we went up."

"Every place looks the same," Gordon growled.

"Listen."

It was Rogers who gave the command and for a moment they strained their ears.

"It's the surf sure's you're born," Gordon finally declared.

"I don't think there's any doubt about it," Bill agreed. "Which way do you make it?"

"Straight ahead, I'd say," Rogers replied.

"Sure it is," Gordon agreed.

"Think we'd better try landing?" Bill again asked.

"Sure, why not?" Gordon answered.

At the word Bill started the forward propeller at the same time slowing down the elevator.

"Tell me when you think we're right over it," he ordered.

"I'd say, now," Rogers told him a few minutes later.

"Same here," Gordon agreed.

They were now up only three hundred feet and the sound of the surf as it broke on the shore was plainly audible but they could not see a thing.

"Keep your eyes open," Bill cried as he stopped the forward propeller.

"Pile of good it'll do," Gordon grumbled.

"I'm going to let her down as slowly as I can and you must let me know if we're going to hit anything," Bill insisted. "If we land in a tree it'll be all day with the plane. Watch now and yell if you see anything."

"I'll yell all right," Gordon promised him.

Slowly the plane settled down until they were only fifty feet above the land and then Gordon shouted:

"I see trees right under us."

Instantly Bill speeded up the elevator and the plane rose to a hundred feet.

"No need of going up so high," Gordon told him.

"Well, I wanted to play it safe."

He started the forward propeller again but shut it off in a couple of minutes.

"Now we'll try it again," he told them.

But once more when they were nearly down they found that trees were in their way and they were forced to try again.

"I'm afraid we're over a good sized forest," Bill said.

"How about going back and trying to land near

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the shore?" Rogers suggested. "Usually there's a fairly wide stretch of beach between the water and the forest. At least there is on most of the islands I've seen."

"I guess it's the best plan," Bill agreed as he started the forward propeller again and turned the wheel as far as he could.

"If it was just dark we could see well enough with a flash light," Gordon declared, "but it's almost as much use as a yellow eyed bean in this fog."

"How about it?" Bill demanded a moment later.

"Shut it off, I think we've gone far enough," Gordon told him.

"Look sharp now."

"Sharp is right."

A moment later the plane landed as light as a feather, as Rogers declared, and with a sigh of great relief, they jumped from their seats to the hard sand.

"Well, we're here," Gordon cried.

"We're here all right but I wish someone would tell me where here is," Bill returned. "Of course we're on an island but I'd give something to know the name of it."

"Well, we're not going to know before morning and that's that," Gordon told him.

CHAPTER IV

MOLOKAI AT LAST

THEY found that they had landed about fifty feet from the water line but not knowing whether it was high or low tide they pushed the plane some hundred feet farther up the beach. By this time darkness had come and, together with the fog, they could hardly see their hands before their faces. Still they all realized that it might have been much worse and no one was disposed to grumble.

"How about some eats?" Gordon asked as soon as they were sure they had the plane in a safe place.

"What do you mean eats?" Bill demanded.

"What does one usually mean when he says eats?" Gordon retorted.

"You've had all the eats you're going to get tonight. Why we ate only an hour or so ago and besides you're not hungry, it's only a habit," Bill told him.

"Maybe you're right," Gordon sighed. "I forgot we're on short rations."

"I'm sorry, but we'll need all we've got for breakfast tomorrow morning," Bill consoled him.

"If I starve before then don't forget that I forgive you," Gordon told him.

"Thanks for those kind words. They sure take a load off my mind," Bill laughed.

"Well, seeing as how there doesn't seem anything else to do and that we got up fairly early I move we go to bed," Gordon proposed a few minutes later.

"Not a bad idea," Rogers agreed. Where are we going to sleep?"

"I guess it's the sand for us," Bill told him. "I wouldn't want to get very far away from the plane and with our blankets it won't be so bad."

It was not cold although a cool wind had sprung up and they were hopeful that it would clear away the fog by morning.

"I've slept in lots worse places than this," Gordon declared a few minutes later. "This sand was laid soft side up."

"It's not half bad," Rogers agreed. "And, believe me, I'm going to sleep."

They were all sleepy and wasted no more time in talking. Some time later Bill opened his eyes and sat up. Something had disturbed his sleep but, for a moment, he had no idea what it was. Then he

was conscious of a strange sound off to his right and seemingly not far away. It began with a low rumble not unlike distant thunder but soon began to change, getting more volume and of a higher note until it rose to a shrill shriek and finally died away in the low rumble with which it had started. Perhaps the whole thing had lasted a minute.

"Did you hear anything?" he heard Gordon whisper not loud enough for him to hear unless he was awake.

"I'll say I did," he whispered back. "Did it wake you up?"

"Something did."

"It was enough to wake the dead."

"Didn't sound like any animal I've ever heard." This last was from Rogers and they knew that he too had been awakened.

"There it goes again," Gordon said.

This time the sound was about the same except that it did not last as long.

"Spooks," Gordon whispered as the wail died away.

"No spooks ever had lungs substantial enough to make a noise like that," Rogers told him.

The wind was still blowing and they noticed that the fog had nearly cleared although it was very dark.

"What time is it?" Gordon asked. "My watch has stopped. Forgot to wind it."

"Quarter past two," Bill told him.

For nearly half an hour they listened to the strange sound which recurred at frequent intervals. Then it stopped.

"If anyone could have seen us when we landed I'd be inclined to think it was someone trying to scare us," Bill said as he stretched out on the sand again.

"Any guy that could do that naturally wouldn't have to try very hard," Gordon told them.

"Which may be true although it doesn't make any sense," Bill declared.

"What doesn't make sense?"

"What you said."

"I'll leave it to Steve if it didn't."

"I think I got your meaning," Rogers chuckled.

"There, smarty," Gordon jeered.

"All right, my mistake. Let's go to sleep."

When Bill awoke again it was broad daylight and the sun was shining. The fog had entirely cleared and the sky was cloudless. A glance at his watch told him that it was nearly seven o'clock and he spoke to the others.

"You fellows going to sleep all day?"

As soon as he had the others really awake, he

looked about him. In front stretched the ocean while back of them and some hundred feet distant grew a thick forest of a variety of tropical trees. The broad hard beach stretched in either distance as far as he could see.

"Well, we sure had plenty of room to land after all," he remarked.

"I'll say we did," Gordon agreed as he got up and stretched himself. "How about breakfast?"

"Always thinking of your tummy," Bill laughed as he began dragging what was left of their supply of food from the plane. "I hope the coffee in this last vacuum bottle is hot."

It was and they made a fairly satisfactory breakfast although Gordon insisted that it was far below par.

"Now," Rogers began as soon as they had finished, "I suppose the first thing in order is to try and find out where we are."

"And locate a base of supplies," Gordon added.

"Say," Gordon asked as they were getting ready to hop off, "did we hear something in the night or did I dream it?"

"If you dreamed it I reckon I did too," Bill told him.

"And that includes me also," Rogers added.

"What was it?" Gordon added.

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"Don't you wish you knew?" Rogers mocked.

"Do you know?"

"Haven't an idea."

"How about you, Bill?"

"Same way."

"But don't you think we ought to know what it was?"

"Maybe, but I don't know how we're going to. We've got other things of more importance on hand just now," Bill told him.

"Perhaps and perhaps not," Gordon retorted. "Anyhow I'd hate most awfully to have whatever it was making it get hold of me."

"Some things aren't so bad as they sound," Rogers smiled.

"Well, that thing could be a whole lot better and then be bad enough," Gordon told him.

They had decided that the best plan was to go up in the plane and see what they could see. So, a few minutes after they had finished eating, they were once again in the air which was remarkably clear.

"This can't be the right island," Gordon declared as soon as they were up about a hundred feet, "it isn't large enough."

"From this map of the islands I think this is Kahoolawe," Rogers said. "It looks to be about

the right size and over there that big island must be Maui."

"Then Molokai ought to be about sixty miles a little east of north from here," Bill suggested.

"Exactly," Rogers agreed.

So Bill headed the plane nearly north and they flew along at an altitude of about six hundred feet.

"That must be Lanai over there to the left," Rogers announced a few minutes later.

"And Molokai straight ahead," Gordon added.

"Righto," Bill agreed.

"It can't be more than a hundred miles to Honolulu," Rogers said. "How about going there and laying in supplies?"

"Oh, boy, right where I live," Gordon chuckled.

"We'll really attract less attention in a large place like Honolulu than if we land near some small town and we don't want to make ourselves any more conspicuous than is necessary the way I figure it," Rogers explained.

"I think you're right," Bill agreed giving the wheel a slight turn to the left.

"According to that old map our stamping ground is not far from that point," Rogers said as, a half hour later, they passed over the western end of Molokai.

"And it doesn't look to me as though that end

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of the island is very thickly populated," Gordon declared as he gazed over the side of the cockpit.

"It isn't," Rogers told him. "That's Laau Point and there's no settlement within about twenty miles of it."

"Can't make us mad, eh?" Gordon chuckled.

"No, the fewer the better," Bill told him.

It was just ten o'clock when the Albatross settled to the ground on the outskirts of the city. Contrary to their hopes, however, the plane had been sighted and there was a large and, as Gordon afterward declared, a very mixed reception committee ready to greet them. In fact it seemed to them that about every nation on the globe was represented. Everyone wanted to shake hands with them and for the better part of an hour they were kept busy at the task. Also everyone wanted to know where they came from and all about them and when they learned that they were from the States their greeting was all the more cordial.

Finally and with great difficulty Rogers made it clear that they were going to remain on the island only long enough to lay in some supplies and that they would positively submit to no receptions or other demonstrations much as they appreciated their very cordial welcome.

Immediately a man, evidently an American, stepped forward and informed them that his car was at their disposal for as long a time as they wished to make use of it.

"You go with him and get what we need and Gordon and I will stay here with the plane," Bill whispered to Rogers and he nodded assent. "I'll get back as soon as I can," he promised.

After he had driven away with the man the crowd continued to besiege the boys with questions as to where they were going and what they were going to do and why they couldn't stay. To all of which they gave more or less evasive answers.

"What island is this," Gordon asked one of them.
"Ohau."

"Oh, I'm all right, but what's the name of this island?"

"Ohau," the man again replied.

"Is he trying to get funny with me?" Gordon whispered to Bill.

"He only told you what you asked him," Bill whispered back trying to keep from laughing.

"You mean—"

"Sure, that's the name of the island, O-H-A-U."

"Oh," Gordon grinned. "I thought he was asking after my health."

It was just noon when Rogers returned with the

back of the car nearly filled with packages of all shapes and sizes.

"I've got our dinner here," he told them indicating a package which he had been carrying in his lap. "Thought we'd eat on the way back instead of going to a hotel."

"Good idea," Bill told him.

They hurried as rapidly as possible in transferring the parcels to the compartment back of the seats in the plane and by half past twelve were ready to start back. The man who had loaned his car begged them to remain on the island as his guests for as long a time as they might wish, but they soon convinced him of the impossibility of such a visit and thanked him most cordially for his kindness in helping them. He told them his name was James Borden and that he lived in the city and begged them to come and see him whenever they could.

"Now how about that box with our dinner in it?" Gordon asked as soon as the plane was headed south.

"Here it is," Rogers laughed as he reached back behind his seat. "Go to it."

They flew along slowly while eating and it was nearly two o'clock when they arrived over Laau Point and prepared to land.

"Doesn't look exactly like a paradise," Gordon

declared as the plane settled down about a hundred yards from the rocky coast.

"Well, we didn't come here for a picnic," Bill reminded him.

"Maybe we'll have one just the same," Rogers added.

It was not a pleasant looking prospect so far as the country itself appeared. It was very rocky for as far as they could see and there were but few trees in sight.

"I thought these tropical islands were covered with palms and beautiful flowers and all that sort of thing," Gordon said as he hopped from the cockpit.

"Then this must be the exception that proves the rule," Bill told him.

"Well we're here anyhow and that's the main thing. Where are we going to live?"

"One place looks about as good as another," Bill told him as he glanced about. "We've got the pup tents and about all we need is to find a soft place to pitch them."

"Most of these rocks look kind of hard to me," Gordon grinned.

"Looks rather inviting over there," Rogers said pointing to a place about a hundred feet from where they were standing.

They hurried over and found a nearly circular spot of sand hemmed in by rocks on all sides. It was about twelve feet in diameter and, as Gordon said, the sand looked reasonably soft.

"Probably it's as good as we'll find and at any rate we'll be rather inconspicuous here," Bill declared.

"But we ought to get the plane nearer," Gordon told them.

"Nothing difficult about that," Bill assured him. "You tell me where you want it and I'll have it there in nothing flat."

By skillful manipulation of the two propellers he kept his promise and by three o'clock they had the little tents up and, as Gordon said, "were all fixed for light housekeeping."

CHAPTER V

SEARCHING

"Now I think we'd better go into a committee of the whole and take a look at that map again," Rogers told them when they were finished.

"We're a committee in a hole all right," Gordon laughed.

"But it isn't a very deep one just at present," Bill added.

By this time Rogers had the old map spread out on a flat rock and the two boys looked over his shoulders as he proceeded to explain it more thoroughly to them.

"Now, as near as I can estimate it, we're right here," he began placing the point of his pencil on the map. "And right off here it looks to me as though he had tried to represent a cliff or a hill only a short distance from the shore. Unfortunately there's no scale to the map so we can't tell how far from here it is, but right here's where he hid the stuff and it's evidently in a cave in the side of the cliff."

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"And it's up to us to find the cliff," Gordon suggested.

"Exactly, and it ought not to be a very difficult task," Rogers told them. "The island isn't large and it's somewhere on this end of it, that's certain."

"Was, you mean, don't you?" Bill asked.

"What do you mean, was? Caves don't run around you know."

"No, but you want to remember that they have earthquakes out here and that cave may have vanished a long time ago. That's what I'm most afraid of," Bill explained.

"Of course that's a chance we've got to take. If it's gone we're out of luck, that's all."

"So far as finding the platinum is concerned you mean?" Gordon asked.

"Certainly that's what I mean. We're having the trip in any case."

"Well, are we going to start to-day or wait till to-morrow?" Bill asked.

"I guess it's too late to do much to-day," Rogers said, "but we might take a walk down to the shore and see what it looks like."

"Wait a minute till we hide those cells," Bill suggested. "We've got to put them where no one will find them and I don't mean maybe."

A good hiding place was soon located behind one

of the rocks which formed the rim of their bowl, as Gordon called it, and they were soon on their way to the shore only a short distance away.

"There are your cliffs all right," Gordon said as they stood on the sand close to the water's edge and looked at the rocky formation.

They had reached the shore by means of a defile which led between two jutting masses of rock and was hardly wide enough to allow them to pass in single file.

"It's low tide now," Rogers declared.

"And at high tide the water must reach to the foot of the cliff," Bill added. "We'll have to watch our step and not get caught by the tide."

"Yep, that wouldn't be so good," Gordon agreed.

"Well, it shouldn't take us very long to go over the ground," Bill mused as he glanced both ways. "There can't be more than a mile either side of where we are to this end of the island and if we don't find it at this end we're—"

"Out of the game," Gordon finished for him.

They walked slowly back and, as it was nearly five o'clock when they reached the bowl, they at once set about preparing supper.

"You must have thought we were going to stay here a long time," Bill said as he began taking their cooking utensils from the plane.

"Well, I thought I might as well get plenty while I was at it," Rogers told him.

"A man after my own heart," Gordon declared slapping him on the back.

"Feed him and you've a friend for life," Bill laughed.

There was plenty of dry bits of wood lying about and in a very few minutes Gordon had a fire going between two rocks just over the edge of the bowl.

"What's the bill of fare?" he asked.

"Sirloin steak two inches thick," Rogers told him.

"My, but I think you're a very nice man," Gordon chuckled.

"I told you," Bill chimed in.

"Say, fellows, I've been thinking," Gordon suddenly said as they were sitting around the fire a couple of hours later.

"Impossible," Bill declared.

"Why is it impossible?" Gordon demanded.

"Well, the act of thinking implies the possession of something with which to do the thinking and—"

"Oh, you mean brains," Gordon interrupted.

"I believe that's what one thinks with," Bill told him.

"Well, I've got 'em and as I was about to say,

when I was so rudely interrupted, I've been thinking—”

“You said that before,” Bill again broke in.

“I've been thinking about that noise we heard last night.”

“Well, what about it?” Bill demanded as he paused.

“I've got to know what it was.”

“Well, I sure hope you find out.”

“I'm not going back home till I do,” Gordon assured him.

“I'm with you there,” Rogers told him. “As soon as we find the platinum we'll go back and investigate.”

“I don't believe in spooks but if there are any such animals, believe me, they live on that island,” Bill declared.

“I wonder how far away we are from anyone here,” Gordon said a few minutes later.

“I don't suppose there's a soul within twenty miles of us,” Rogers told him.

“You getting scared?” Bill laughed.

“Scared nothing,” Gordon snapped. “I was just curious, that's all.”

“That's what killed a cat,” Bill told him.

It was getting dark by this time and Rogers suggested that they turn in and get up early, reminding

them that it would be high tide about nine o'clock and that if they were to do any searching in the forenoon they would have to get an early start. So half an hour later they were all asleep in the pup tents. Gordon had fallen asleep more than half expecting to be awakened by that same weird cry that had disturbed him the night before. But there was no disturbance and it was light when Bill called him.

"Going to sleep all day?" he asked him as he grabbed hold of his feet and pulled him from the tent.

"What time is it?"

"Almost four o'clock."

"Gee, I must have overslept," Gordon groaned sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "Is Steve up yet?"

"Sure he is."

"But I don't see him."

"He's gone for some water. There's a little brook about fifty rods back that he discovered yesterday while we were getting supper. I've got the fire going."

"Here he comes now."

"Breakfast will be ready in two shakes of a lamb's tail," Bill told him.

Bill was almost as good as his word and by five o'clock they were ready to start exploring. The

tide was coming in but there was a strip of sand some forty feet wide between the sea and the cliffs.

"I reckon it'll be a couple of hours before the water gets up to the rocks," Rogers told them as they started along toward the north. "Now we want to keep our eyes peeled and not miss a single bet," he cautioned them.

"I guess there's only one to miss and that's the cave," Gordon chuckled.

For the greater part of the way so far as they could see the wall of rocks was about twelve feet high and very rugged. As they walked slowly along they scanned every inch closely.

"Looks like a hole up there," Gordon suddenly cried after they had gone about a hundred feet.

"Where do you mean?" Bill asked eagerly.

"Right up there above that bit of rock that's sticking out. Can't you see it?"

"I can see the rock sticking out but I can't see any hole," Bill declared.

"Neither can I," Rogers backed him up.

"You must both be blind," Gordon asserted. "I believe I can climb up there."

"But I tell you there's nothing there," Bill insisted.

"I'm going to take a look anyhow," Gordon

insisted as he started for the foot of the cliff.

But when he got close up to it it did not look so easy. The wall at that point was almost perpendicular and there seemed to be but few toeholds.

"Give me a boost up so I can reach that crack and I believe I can make it," he said.

"Look out you don't slip now," Bill cautioned as he bent his knee.

Standing on Bill's shoulders Gordon found that he could reach the crack and by drawing himself up he was able to get his feet on an outjutting rock, but it was a very precarious hold.

"Better spit on your hands," Bill called up to him.

"My hands are all right but I don't know what to do with my feet," he called back.

But he managed a moment later to get his fingers in another crack a little higher up and to bring his feet up to a more secure footing on a bit of ledge. From this position he was able to peep over the rock behind which he was convinced was a hole into the cliff. But the brief glance he caught, while almost hanging by his finger tips, showed him that he had been mistaken. There was no opening there and a second later he dropped to the sand with a sheepish look on his face.

"Satisfied?" Bill demanded.

"Sure, but I wouldn't have been if I hadn't looked," he replied.

"Then I guess it's a good thing you looked," Bill told him.

"Well, there might have been a hole there," Gordon insisted.

"Sure, but I told you there wasn't, didn't I?"

"Believe you did say something to that effect."

"Well, now that it's settled, suppose we continue," Rogers suggested.

They went on for perhaps a quarter of a mile without seeing anything which even suggested a cave in the rocks and finally Rogers gave it as his opinion that they'd better turn back. "We've got to hurry now if we don't want to get our feet wet," he declared.

But they got back without having to run and Gordon grumbled over the fact that they would have to wait six hours before they could do any more exploring.

"That's the worst of a tide," he told them. "Up in God's country you don't have to wait for them. The water always stays put and you know where it is any time of the day or night."

"Some people would grumble if they were going to be hanged," Bill remarked.

"Who wouldn't," Gordon retorted.

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"I suppose we could take the plane and fly along by the cliff and see what we could find," Bill suggested as they reached camp.

"Say, that wouldn't be a bad idea," Gordon declared. "It'll kill time anyhow."

"I'm voting for it," Rogers added.

"All right, then. Wait a minute till I get a couple of cells," Bill said as he pulled out the stone which hid the hiding place.

He reached his hand in and a look first of amazement and then of incredulity spread over his face. "Say," he called, "Isn't this the place where we hid them?"

"Of course it is," Gordon told him. "Don't tell me they aren't there."

"I've got to," Bill gasped turning about and facing them.

"Nonsense. Of course they're there," Gordon cried.

"Feel for yourself."

Gordon felt and was obliged to acknowledge that the cells were gone.

"What do you know about that?" he cried as he straightened up.

"Someone must have been watching us when we hid them," Rogers told them.

"See if there are any foot prints," Bill ordered.

But the sand of the bowl was too thoroughly covered with their own marks to yield anything and outside there were too many rocks.

"See if any of the other stuff is gone," Gordon suggested, and they all rushed to the place where they had cached their provisions. But nothing, so far as they could tell, had been disturbed and for a moment they stood and looked at each other speechless. "Can you beat it?" Gordon finally gasped.

"Looks as though—" Bill began and then broke off sharp. "Wait a minute," he cried as he started for the plane.

They saw him jump into the cockpit and bend over the driver's seat. For a moment he rummaged in the small compartment and then straightened up with a cry of triumph.

"Oh, baby," Gordon shouted as he saw that Bill was holding up two of the precious cells. "How'd they happen to be in there?"

"They're old ones," Bill explained. "And I'd forgotten all about them till just that minute and even then I wasn't sure they were there. I don't know how much juice there is in them but I reckon there's enough to last an hour or more. You know we've never used them till they're dry."

"But what are we going to do?" Gordon demanded.

"Why, go after that fellow of course. What did you think we were going to do, sit down and cry about it?"

"But—"

"He can't be very far off unless he had a car and he didn't have one, that's sure."

"I guess you're right about that," Rogers agreed. "He couldn't get very near here in a car unless it had a caterpillar tread."

"And if he had that he'd not be very far off yet," Bill declared. "He can't have more than a couple of hours start. But come on, we don't want to give him any more."

"Maybe there's more than one of them," Rogers suggested as they took their seats.

"Doesn't make any difference if there's an army," Gordon told him. "We've got to get 'em back just the same. In the first place they don't belong to us and in the second we need 'em."

"I'll tell the world we do," Bill added, as he started the elevator. "Now use your eyes as you never used them before."

"Or ever expect to again," Gordon added.

They had two field glasses and he handed one pair to Rogers as the plane left the ground. Almost as soon as they were in the air Bill started the forward propeller and the plane headed inland. They had

decided to fly at an altitude of about 100 feet which would give them a fairly wide vision and at the same time permit them to make a thorough search. The one thing to be feared more than any other, Bill had explained, was that the fugitive would see them before they saw him and find a hiding place. "And, believe me, that wouldn't be a hard thing to do most anywhere around here," he declared.

"Good thing the plane doesn't make a noise," Gordon said.

"We'd be helpless if it did," Rogers told him.

Bill had headed the plane toward the north deeming it best to zig-zag across the island so as to cover the entire area. The character of the ground beneath them changed but little as they flew along. Very rocky and rough there was but little vegetation and but few trees except the fringe just back of the cliffs.

"No wonder they picked this island for a leper's colony," Gordon said a few minutes after they started. "No man would live here if he could help it, that is if he had any sense."

They had flown across the island three times and were about half way across again before they sighted their quarry.

"There he goes," Gordon suddenly cried pointing

off to the right of the direction they were going.
"See him Steve?"

"Not yet," Rogers replied. "Where do you mean?"

"Right over there by that big tree there. Don't you see that fellow running as though the old boy himself was after him?"

"Now I do."

Bill had stopped the forward propeller and started the elevator at Gordon's cry and now the plane had nearly lost its momentum.

"Think he's seen us?" he asked.

"Don't believe so," Gordon told him. "He hasn't looked this way."

"Well, keep your eyes on him and don't lose him," Bill ordered as he again started the forward propeller.

Slowly the plane started forward and in a very few minutes was only a few yards behind the man who was running with the easy swing of the trained athlete. They could see now that he was either Chinese or Japanese and the loose blouse which he wore sagged heavily as if weighted at the bottom.

"He's got the cells all right," Gordon declared.
"See how that blouse hangs."

"No doubt of it," Rogers agreed.

"And we've just the same as got him," Gordon chuckled.

"But we want to be careful," Rogers whispered, for they were now very close. "Some of those fellows are pretty slippery customers."

Just then the man looked up and saw them.

CHAPTER VI

THE CELLS RECOVERED

WHEN the Japanese, for that was the nationality of the man, caught sight of the plane, only a few feet over his head, he gave vent to a startled grunt of mingled surprise and fear and stopped in his tracks. The ground, where he was standing, was not so rough as they had so far encountered and Bill had no trouble in selecting a good landing place only a few feet away. Hardly had the plane struck the earth when Gordon was over the side of the cockpit and after the Jap.

"Easy, Gordon," Rogers called.

But Gordon was mad and paid no attention to the warning as he came in front of the man who was standing with a look of incredulity on his face.

"Hand 'em over," Gordon demanded.

The Jap held out his hands. "Me no unstand," he said.

"Well, I reckon you'll understand this," Gordon snapped as he leaped for the man.

But in that he showed poor judgment as he after-

ward acknowledged. He never did understand just what happened but he did know that hardly had he touched the Jap when he was flying through the air to land on his head and shoulders fully six feet away. Fortunately he struck in a soft spot or he would undoubtedly have been severely injured if not killed outright. As it was he was severely shaken up and for a moment was too dazed to move.

"Are you killed, Gordon?" Bill demanded, as he rushed to him.

"I—I don't know," he stammered. "What was it?"

Bill pulled him to his feet and a sigh of relief escaped him as he saw that he could stand. "All right?" he asked.

"I—I guess so, but what was it?" Gordon again asked. "Something hit me."

"I'll say it did," Bill chuckled as he pointed to the Jap who was now standing with both hands held high above his head, his eyes fixed on an automatic in the hands of Rogers.

"I told you to go easy," the latter grinned as the boys stepped to his side.

"I—I didn't think he—"

"Well, you know now," Rogers interrupted. "One of you see if he's got them while I keep him cov-

ered. No monkey business, now," he ordered as Bill stepped forward.

He had no trouble in finding the six cells in the voluminous pocket of the Jap's blouse, and as he drew them out one by one he chuckled with satisfaction.

"W-what we going to—to do with him?" Gordon asked. His head was still a bit dizzy and his shoulders ached.

"Me no—" the Jap began, but Rogers interrupted:

"Shut up."

"But—"

"I told you to shut up," Rogers again snapped. "We're running the show just now."

"Guess we'll have to let him go," Bill suggested.

"How about shooting him?" Rogers asked and the Jap's face took on an ashen hue.

"Well, I don't know but it would be a good plan," Bill said, catching on to Rogers' plan.

"Me no want to be shoted," the Jap pleaded.

"What do you mean by stealing those things?" Rogers demanded.

"Me no steal 'em."

"Cut out the lying. I suppose you just borrowed them, eh?"

"Yes—yes, me borrow 'em."

"What were you going to do with them," Bill asked him.

"Me goin' bring 'em right back."

"I suppose so," Bill laughed. "Now see here if we let you go you going to keep away from us?"

"Yes—yes, me no come again, never."

"Well, you'd better not. You won't get off so easily the next time. Now get," Rogers ordered.

And he got, as Gordon laughingly declared a moment later.

"Say," he grinned as the Jap, running for dear life, disappeared, "that fellow certainly knows how to defend himself. Did you see him toss me?"

"We saw him all right," Bill laughed. "And let me tell you one thing, you're mighty lucky you didn't get hurt. If your head had struck a stone—but I don't know though," he hesitated. "I guess it would have taken a pretty hard stone to make a dent in that skull of yours. But seriously, Gordon, you should have used better judgment. Those fellows are past masters when it comes to rough and tumble stuff."

"You don't have to tell me anything about it," Gordon grinned. "I know it. But I was a fool, there's no doubt about that part of it, but you see, I was so anxious to get those cells back that I didn't stop to think. Anyhow, I guess we've seen the last of that guy."

"I'm not so sure of that," Rogers mused. "Some of those Japs are the very dickens when it comes to pertinacity. But one thing I can't understand and that is why he took the cells and passed up our grub and other things."

"If he saw us hide them, and of course he must have, he probably got the idea that they were valuable," Bill suggested.

"Funny what he was doing away out there anyhow," Gordon said. "He must have been pretty near us when we landed as we hid them soon after."

"That's very true," Rogers told him. "He was there all right, but it's pretty hard to guess what for. Maybe we'll find out later."

"You really think we'll see him again?" Bill asked.

"Oh, I don't know. I guess we gave him a pretty good scare," Rogers replied. "But a bad Jap is a mighty bad hombre. I know because I've had dealings with them before. Once one of them sets his mind on a thing it's mighty hard to persuade him that he'd better give it up."

"Anyhow it means that we'll have to be on our guard from now on," Gordon suggested.

"Every minute," Rogers told him.

"Well, if he gets us again it'll be our own fault," Bill added.

"Forewarned is forearmed," Rogers told them.

"Sure is, but I guess we might as well get back. I'm getting—"

"Hungry," Bill finished the statement.

"And I don't mean maybe," Gordon laughed.

"Now," Rogers began as soon as they were back in camp, "the first thing to do is to find a new hiding place for those cells."

"How about hiding them in different places?" Gordon suggested.

"That's an excellent idea," Rogers agreed.

It took the better part of an hour to find three satisfactory hiding places but it was finally accomplished to their satisfaction and then Gordon suggested that it was time to get dinner.

"You know that blow on the head has made me hungry," he told them.

"As if you were ever anything else but," Bill laughed.

"But I mean more than usual," Gordon grinned.

"Then you must be hungry," Bill told him.

"Now you're talking."

"I don't believe anyone will find those cells again," Rogers declared an hour later as they started eating.

"Unless he was watching us hide them," Bill said.

"Well, that Jap wasn't, that's certain," Gordon told them. "He never could have got back in time."

"No, I don't think he could have," Rogers agreed.
"But he isn't the only Jap on the island, you know."

"You mean you've got a hunch?"

"No, I don't think so, only I wish that fellow hadn't been here."

"I'd feel a bit easier myself if he hadn't," Bill said soberly.

"I believe you two fellows are getting the heebie jeebies," Gordon chuckled. "Just because that guy happened to be out here when we landed you conjure up a deep laid plot against us. I'm here to tell you that we scared the life out of him and he won't bother us again."

"Well, I sure hope you're right," Rogers told him.

"Of course I'm right," Gordon declared. "But we'll not be caught napping just the same."

"Which means that one of us will have to stay right here all the time," Rogers said.

"I suppose that's the best thing to do," Bill agreed.

"It's the only thing," Rogers told him.

After the meal they drew lots to see who would stay behind while the others continued the search along the cliffs. The lot fell to Bill and he told them that he would do the dishes and for them to start at once as the tide would be out far enough to allow them to go on. "And mind you keep an eye

on the kid and don't let him do anything foolish," he added.

"I'll look out for him," Rogers promised.

"Guess I'm old enough to look out for myself," Gordon grumbled.

"Didn't look like it this forenoon," Bill reminded him.

"You'd be surprised," Gordon laughed.

"Keep your gun handy," Rogers advised as they started off.

"You bet," Bill called after them.

Rogers and Gordon found that the tide had receded enough so that they could walk along close to the bottom of the cliffs and hurried along at a smart pace until they had reached the place where they had turned back that morning.

"Now we'll have to take it slowly," Rogers said as he stopped and mopped his face as it was very hot.

The face of the cliff reflected the rays of the sun and, as Gordon declared, made the place feel like a furnace.

"The sun will be over it in a short time and then I guess it will be cooler," Rogers told him.

"Well, it doesn't seem as though it could get much hotter," Gordon sighed.

"Here the cliff was a little higher than it had been

up to this point and they were determined not to miss anything. So they walked slowly along keeping their eyes fixed on the rocks. They had gone about an eighth of a mile from where they had stopped when they reached a rift in the cliff. The opening was not more than three feet wide but reached from the bottom to the top.

"This isn't a cave," Rogers said, "but it's possible that it's the place."

"It doesn't go back more than about fifty feet," Gordon said as he stood in the entrance.

"Well, it won't do any harm to take a look at it now that we're here."

"Of course we'll look it over and thoroughly too."

So they worked their way slowly along the narrow pass climbing over huge rocks and stopping every minute or two to examine the ground as well as the walls.

"Just as like as not this wasn't here a hundred years ago," Gordon grunted when they had covered about thirty feet.

"Perhaps not," Rogers agreed.

"It's cooler in here anyhow and that's one thing to be thankful for."

"Yes, the shade after that hot sun is very grateful."

"I reckon the sun doesn't get in here for a very

long time each day," Gordon said glancing up. "Great guns!"

"What is it?"

"Someone was watching us from up there," Gordon whispered.

"Nonsense."

"I tell you I saw him. He was right by that shrub there."

"You're sure?"

"Dead certain, although he dodged back mighty quick."

"Jap?"

"I'm not so sure about that. I only had a glimpse of him, but I think it was."

"Think it was the same one?"

"Don't know."

"Well, he's had time to get back all right, but I didn't expect him so soon."

"Look out!"

Gordon jumped to one side and not an instant too soon for a rock about the size of a man's head struck the ground where he had been standing. Roger's face was as white as a sheet of paper when Gordon looked at him and he felt, as he afterward told him, rather weak in the knees.

"That was a bit too close for comfort," he gasped.

"Follow me," Rogers said as he turned and ran

for the entrance of the rift, and Gordon needed no urging. "That rock came mighty near getting you," he said as soon as they were safely out on the sand.

"But I don't get his idea."

"His idea was plain enough: he meant to kill us."

"But why should he want to do a thing like that?"

"That's not so plain. But we'd better get back and see if Bill is all right. There may be more than one of them after us."

"There's one anyhow all right," Gordon said as he started after Rogers on the run.

Bill was cleaning the motor of the Albatross when they got back and looked up in surprise as he heard them.

"Found it all ready?" he asked.

"Seen anyone around here?" Rogers asked instead of replying to his question.

"Not a soul."

"Well, we have," Gordon told him.

"You have?"

"And he pretty near got one of us," Gordon added.

"You mean—?"

"Yep, just that," and Gordon told him what had happened.

"That's serious," Bill said when he had finished.

"I'll say it is," Rogers agreed.

"And it means that we've got to find out what's

up before we do any more searching after the lost treasure," Bill told them.

"You hit the nail on the head that time," Rogers declared.

"And the best way to do it is to take the plane and make a search all over this part of the island," Bill advised.

Ten minutes later they were in the air and for two hours flew back and forth until they had covered the entire end of the island. But not a sign of human life did they see, and about six o'clock they returned to camp greatly disappointed.

"But there's plenty of places where a fellow could hide so that we couldn't see him from the plane," Rogers told them as they climbed from the cockpit.

"And it doesn't mean a thing that we didn't see him," Gordon added.

"Or them," Bill amended.

"But we've got to find him or them," Gordon insisted.

"Or else give up and beat it home," Bill grinned.

"Not on your life," Gordon snorted. "I'm not going to be run off by any little two by four like that fellow."

"I thought not," Rogers said. "But one thing's certain. We must not go below those cliffs again

till we know what's up. We haven't a chance against a fellow up on top with a good sized rock."

"Not a chance in the world," Gordon agreed.
"How about some eats?"

Supper was rather a quiet meal. No one seemed to have much to say, each being busy with his own thoughts and, even when they were gathered around the fire after darkness had fallen conversation languished.

"I'll take the first watch until one o'clock," Bill finally said.

"Call me then," Rogers told him.

"And when do I come in?" Gordon demanded.

"I'll call you at four," Rogers promised.

"After it gets light: nothing doing. It's nine now and Bill will watch till twelve and you till three and then I'll finish it out. Get me?"

"All right, have it your own way," Rogers laughed.

"And you call us if you see or hear the least thing that seems suspicious," Gordon added as he rolled himself in his blanket and crawled into his tent.

"I won't take any chances," Bill promised as he put some more wood on the fire.

CHAPTER VII

WHERE IS GORDON?

THE night passed without incident except that Rogers did not call Gordon until nearly four o'clock and as a result received what he designated "a bawling out for fair." Breakfast was an early meal as they were all on the anxious seat and were eager for action. So, as soon as the meal was over they held a council of war to decide what steps to take.

"There's one thing about it," Rogers opened the discussion, "and that is that we've got to do something."

"Fact?" Gordon asked in a joking tone.

"What I mean is that we've got to take the offensive," Rogers explained. "The fact that he or they made no attack on us last night seems to indicate that they're going to play a waiting game."

"And that doesn't suit us at all," Bill declared. "We want to get on with the work we came out here to do."

"Spoken like a soldier," Gordon told him.

"But we've got to keep away from the cliffs until

we know it's safe. As it is now they have all the advantage and we don't want to stop any stones with our heads."

"Or with any other part of our anatomy for that matter," Bill added.

"How about taking a stroll along the top of them?" Gordon suggested. "We couldn't find him or them with the help of the plane but maybe we can do it on foot."

"That's what I was going to suggest," Rogers said. "But I'm not sure as it will be safe," he added soberly.

"Well, I'd rather take a walk on the top of them than down below the way things stand now," Gordon told him.

"So would I," Rogers told him, "but that doesn't make it safe, you know."

"But I don't believe the fellow, whoever it was, is armed," Bill declared. "If he had been he'd have used his gun instead of a stone."

"That sounds reasonable, but it isn't certain," Rogers told him.

"Well, there are only two certain things in this world, so I've heard, and they are death and taxes," Gordon smiled.

"But I think it's a safe bet that he hasn't got a gun," Bill insisted.

"All right, but we've got to be careful," Rogers in turn insisted. "Now if you boys will stay here and guard the camp I'll take a walk and see what I can find."

"Did you hear what I heard, Bill?" Gordon asked. "I heard something that doesn't go," Bill laughed. "Not an inch, it doesn't. Say, Steve, just what do you take us for?"

"Well, I only thought—"

"Just turn your thoughts in another direction," Gordon interrupted. "You know it doesn't need but one to guard the camp."

"All right, all right. You two match to see who goes with me."

"How about all three of us matching to see who stays?" Bill suggested.

But on that proposition Rogers put his foot down flat and nothing could change him. "No," he declared, "I'll take either one of you but I won't stay here and let you both go and there's no use in wasting time over it."

It was finally decided that Gordon would stay, and after cautioning him to keep his eyes open, Rogers and Bill started off.

"You don't suppose do you that that fellow, whoever he is, knows what we're here for?" Bill asked after they had gone a short distance.

"I hardly see how he could," Rogers told him. "Of course he probably suspects that we're hunting for something."

"But if he does I shouldn't think he'd want to bump us off till we find it."

"That's so, too. I hadn't thought of it in that way."

"Seems to me more likely that in some way we're treading on his toes if you know what I mean."

"You mean that he's hunting for something and that we're in his way?"

"Something like that."

"Well, that may be it."

By this time they had reached the top of the cliffs a little to the right of the pathway along which they had reached the shore. The ground here was very uneven and covered with rocks of all sizes interspersed with clumps of low bushes with here and there a tuft of tall grass.

"Gee, but there are as many good hiding places along here as Carter has liver pills," Bill declared. "A fellow could keep out of sight of an army easily enough."

"That's a lot," Rogers laughed.

They walked or rather picked their way slowly along the edge keeping both eyes and ears alert for the sight or sound of the man or men they were

hunting. But they finally reached the rift, where the rock had been thrown the day before, without seeing or hearing anything at all suspicious.

"Well, I reckon we've drawn a blank so far," Bill whispered as they stood close together on the edge of the rift.

"Looks very much that way," Rogers agreed. "But, to tell the truth, I didn't really expect anything different."

"And neither did I," Bill agreed with a slight smile.

"Well, what'll we do now? Go back keeping farther from the edge?"

"I suppose that's the logical thing to do."

"But you don't think it'll do any good, eh?"

"Frankly, I doubt it."

"So do I, but we'll try it. I don't know of a better plan, so come on."

Half an hour later they were back again at the point opposite the camp and, as Bill put it, knew just as much as when they started.

"And no more," Rogers smiled.

"But the discouraging part of it is that we may have passed within a few feet of him and never knew it."

"Like hunting for a needle in a hay stack," Rogers declared.

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"Well, we might's well get back to camp and hold another council of war."

"I reckon."

But when they arrived a few minutes later a surprise awaited them. Gordon was nowhere in sight. Everything seemed in perfect order and there was no sign that anything out of the ordinary had taken place except that he had disappeared.

"Probably gone to the spring for water," Rogers suggested.

"I'll take a look," Bill said and started on the run.

But he was back in a few minutes with word that the missing boy was not there. "I'll give him a call," he said as he put his fingers to his lips and sent forth a loud whistle. "That'll get him if he's within a half mile," he declared.

But the whistle brought no response, and for a moment the two looked at each other without speaking. Then Bill broke the silence:

"Something's happened and we've got to find out what. We must look for signs."

But a thorough search all about the camp revealed nothing. There was not the slightest sign of a struggle and nothing was missing except Gordon.

"He must have gone somewhere of his own accord," Rogers declared. "I can't picture him being carried off without putting up a fight and you

couldn't put up much of a scrap without leaving some indication of it."

"But why should he go away and leave things to guard themselves? That isn't like Gordon."

"That's true too, but—"

"I used to think I was pretty good at reading signs in the woods and following trails and all that sort of thing," Bill interrupted, "but I can't make a thing out of this mess. There's absolutely nothing to read so far as I can see."

"Try that whistle once more."

Bill obeyed but there was no response and for several minutes neither spoke. Never, perhaps, had Bill been so worried. The disappearance of his brother coming so soon after the attempt on his life seemed most ominous, and he felt so helpless not knowing which way to turn.

"Well, we're not getting anywhere standing still and thinking about it," he finally declared. "Gordon never went off and left his post without some good reason and, in spite of the fact that we can find nothing to indicate it, I believe he was carried off."

"What will we do?"

"We'll take the plane and see what we can find."

Bill quickly took two of the cells from their hiding place and in another minute threw over the

switch. But, greatly to his surprise, nothing happened.

"Maybe there is a sign after all," he said as he started the search for the trouble. "Wires are all right," he declared after a short inspection. "I can't see—yes I can too, here's the trouble. The brushes are gone from this commutator. Now what do you know about that? Must have been done by someone that knows something about a motor."

"How about the brushes in the other motor?"

"They're all right."

"Then we can go straight up?"

"Tell you in a minute."

Bill threw on the switch of the elevator and the propeller at once began to revolve. "Yep, it's all right," he announced. "But a lot of good it'll do us."

"How about changing those brushes? Won't they fit the other motor?"

"They'll fit all right but there's no chance to get off the ground here without the elevator, it's too rough."

"That's so too."

"If we were only down on the beach we could do it."

"Couldn't we push it down?"

"In about a day's time."

"Sure you haven't any spare brushes?"

"It's just possible Gordon put some in the tool kit. I know I didn't. I'll take a look. We sure are in luck," he announced a moment later. "Here's a half dozen new ones. Now just a minute and I'll have them in."

Ten minutes later they were in the air and ready to start the search.

"I'm going to fly as slow as possible and keep as near the ground as I dare," Bill told his companion. "He can't be very far off and unless he's hidden out of sight we ought to see him. I'll go around in a circle making it a little larger each time."

"Don't build too many hopes on finding him this way," Rogers advised. "If the parties who did it knew enough to take those brushes out they'll probably be wise enough to keep out of sight."

"But they'll think we can't use the plane."

"Unless they see us."

"Of course we've got to risk that."

"It's a strange thing to me that he didn't smash the plane and make sure of it," Rogers said a few minutes later.

"I've thought of that," Bill told him. "But perhaps he has hopes of using it himself, and so didn't want to hurt it. I suppose it didn't occur to him that we'd have any extra brushes along."

"I dare say you're right."

They were flying at about twenty-five miles an hour and not more than a hundred feet from the ground. Rogers was searching the territory with the powerful glass and Bill was keeping his eyes on the region directly beneath them. They had made half a dozen circles when Rogers suddenly cried:

"Come back over that big clump of bushes just to our right, Bill."

"Did you see something?"

"I'm not sure but I'd like to take another look."

"Sure thing," Bill told him giving the wheel a sharp turn.

"Go as low as you can."

"Touch the tops of them if you say so."

"Well, come pretty near it," Rogers ordered as the plane swung around in a broad circle.

"Right?"

"Just a bit more to the left."

"Right."

"I thought so," Rogers said in a low tone as the plane passed over the clump so low that it barely missed the top of the thick growth of bushes.

"What is it?" Bill demanded.

"There's a little hut in that clump."

"You sure? I didn't see it."

"You wouldn't from your side of the plane, but it's there just the same."

"Didn't see anyone, did you?"

"No, but I'm betting there's someone there just the same."

"We'll find out mighty soon," Bill promised as he searched the ground for a good landing place.

He had already started the elevator and now the plane was almost stationary.

"Right there to your right is a good place," Rogers directed and a moment later they leaped from their seats.

"Better take those cells out," Rogers advised.

"I'll do that," Bill told him. "We don't want the plane swiped."

They had landed some hundred yards from the clump of bushes, and taking their automatics from their pockets, they lost no time in approaching it.

"Mum's the word," Rogers whispered as they drew near.

"They've probably seen the plane, that is, if there's anyone there," Bill whispered.

"Wouldn't wonder, but we'll be careful just the same. There's a chance they haven't."

The clump of bushes was nearly circular and about eighty feet in diameter and they could see that it was very dense. The bushes, which to Bill, looked

much like small fir trees, grew in a tangled mass and it looked as though one would have great difficulty in forcing one's way through.

"There must be a path somewhere," Rogers whispered when they were within a few feet of it.

"And it'll be guarded more than likely if there's anyone at home. I think we'd better try to get through some other place."

"Looks pretty thick."

"Sure does, but we can do it if we take time enough."

CHAPTER VIII

GORDON KIDNAPPED

GORDON was a great reader and usually had two or three books stuck away somewhere in the plane whenever they went for a long trip. Up to this time he had had little time to read and had taken none of his books from the plane, but soon after Rogers and Bill had gone he bethought himself of a book that he had started before leaving home and which he thought he had put in the space under his seat. So they were hardly out of sight when he had found the book and selected a comfortable seat close by the plane.

The book was most entertaining and soon he was, as Bill often told him when he was reading, "lost to the world." However, he was not so deeply engrossed that he did not look up from time to time to see that everything was all right. Half an hour passed and the book was getting more interesting every page when, without the slightest warning, a hand was pressed over his mouth and he was pulled

over backward. So sudden was the attack that he was on his back before he realized what had happened.

Gordon was not one to submit to such treatment without strenuous protest and he grabbed for the arm which encircled his neck. But, even as he did so, a numbing pain gripped his neck which rung a low moan from his lips. At the same time a voice hissed close to his ear.

"Keep still and you'll not get hurt."

Realizing that he was in the hands of an expert when it came to inflicting pain he quickly decided that he had better obey for the time at least. So he ceased struggling and almost before he knew what was happening his hands were tied tightly together behind his back and his captor was ordering him to get up. As he expected his eyes, when he turned, fell on the smiling countenance of a Japanese, but whether or not he was the same one that had stolen the cells he was unable to say.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded.

Instead of replying to the question the man searched him and took away his revolver which he carried in his coat pocket.

"What's the idea?" Gordon again demanded.

"Maybe you will find out later, maybe not," the man told him. He spoke in good English and with

almost no accent, a fact which greatly surprised Gordon.

"But—" Gordon began, but the Jap interrupted.

"You stay right where you are a moment and don't try to get away because I shall surely shoot you if you do and I'm a pretty good shot."

Keeping his eye on the boy he stepped to the plane and Gordon could tell that he was doing something to it but could only guess what it might be. Then he stepped back and, pointing toward the northwest, ordered Gordon to walk in front of him.

"Suppose I refuse?" Gordon asked.

"Did you like that pain in the back of your neck?" the Jap demanded.

"Not particularly."

"That was nothing to what I can do."

"I believe you."

"Then if you don't wish for a demonstration you'll do as I say."

"You win," Gordon told him as he turned and started off in the direction indicated.

"Step along lively now and don't try any funny business," the Jap ordered as he followed close behind.

"I'm not likely to as long's you've got that gun trained on my back," Gordon growled.

"You won't get hurt if you do as I say."

"Thanks."

For twenty minutes they hurried along, the Jap directing Gordon as to the direction he was to take and telling him when to change it. Then they reached a thick clump of bushes, and when he had gone half way around it at the order of his captor, he perceived a narrow path leading directly into it.

"Here we are," the Jap announced. "Go right in and I'll follow."

Knowing there was nothing else to do Gordon did not stop to argue the matter but led the way and a moment later found himself inside a small hut built of poles stuck in a circle and fastened together at the top much after the fashion of an Indian tepee. There were three boxes inside which served as chairs and a bed of grass covered with an old blanket.

"This where you live?" Gordon asked as he looked about him.

"Just at present," the Jap told him.

"Well, now perhaps, you'll tell me what it's all about."

"Not yet."

"No?"

"You may sit down."

"Thanks."

Gordon sat down on one of the boxes and the Jap, still holding the gun in his hand, sat on another.

"What's the name of the man with you?" he demanded.

"Rogers."

"That's a lie," the Jap snarled.

"Well, if you know, why ask me?" Gordon demanded with no less heat.

"Maybe you think that's his name."

"You bet your life I do, and what's more, I know it is."

"Who's the other boy?"

"My brother."

"What's his name?"

"Bill Hunniwell."

"And yours?"

"Gordon."

"Where do you live?"

"In Maine."

"Rogers live there too?"

"No, he lives in New York."

"How long have you known him?"

"Rogers?"

"Certainly."

"About a year. But, say, what's the idea of all the questions?"

"That's my business. You answer them, that's all

you've got to do right now. What is this Rogers' business?"

"You mean what does he do for a living?"

"That's what I mean."

The affair was getting more mysterious to Gordon every minute. That the Jap was an educated man was plainly evident and that he was a determined one was even more so. Gordon was, by this time, certain that there was much more involved in the game than appeared on the surface. But what the game was he had no idea. However, he had come to the conclusion that he had better be a bit guarded in his answers. So he hesitated a moment at this last question.

"Well?" the Jap snapped.

"I'm not so sure," Gordon told him.

"You mean you don't know what he does?"

"No, I didn't mean that."

"What did you mean, then?"

"Why, you said it was well and I said I wasn't so sure. As a matter of fact it isn't at all well from my point of view."

"Don't get funny," the Jap snarled. "What does he do?"

"I don't think I shall tell you that," Gordon said slowly.

"You won't? Why won't you?"

"Well, for one thing I don't like your attitude and for another I'm not sure that it's any of your business."

"Then I'll make you."

"How?"

"That pain in your neck, it wasn't very pleasant, was it?"

"I'll say it wasn't."

"Now you understand how I can make you?"

"I think I get your drift."

"That pain was nothing."

"Maybe not, but it felt something to me," Gordon grinned.

In spite of the man's actions and threats there was something about him that drew him and he did not believe he would torture him.

"Once more, are you going to answer my question?" the Jap asked getting up from his seat.

"Suppose you tell me why you are so anxious to know," Gordon suggested.

"You are in no position to dictate."

"I guess you're right there. Still, I'd like to know."

"But you aren't going to, that is, not now."

"I reckon that goes both ways then," Gordon smiled.

"You'll feel differently about it in a minute," the

Jap told him as he stepped forward still holding the gun pointed at him.

As the man advanced Gordon also got to his feet and for an instant the two looked in each other's eyes as though it were to be a battle of wills. Then, taking another step, the Jap placed his left hand on the back of the boy's neck at the same time pressing the gun against his breast.

"You're a mighty brave man," Gordon sneered.

Instead of replying to the taunt the Jap pressed with his fingers and again that fierce pain ran through his neck. But only for an instant. Angered now to the point of not caring what happened, Gordon suddenly ducked and threw himself against the other's legs and they came to the ground together, the gun flying from the Jap's hand. But it was, of course, a useless gesture. Even had his hands been free he would have been no match for the man skilled as he was in the traditional art of his race. All this Gordon realized as he felt himself yanked to his feet.

"You are a very brave boy," the Jap declared as he picked up the revolver, "and I shall not hurt you again."

"Thanks," Gordon grinned and resumed his seat on the box. "In return for your kindness I wish I could tell you what you want to know but I don't

think it would be right, not with my present amount of knowledge. You see, he's a very dear friend."

"All right. I don't blame you. Maybe I can find out some other way. I suppose they'll start hunting for you as soon as they get back."

"Probably."

"That's what I want them to do."

"You do?"

"I certainly do."

"Say, did you do anything to the plane?" Gordon asked after a short pause.

"I fixed it so that they can't fly it."

"What was the idea, if you want them to find me?"

"They might have been scared off and left."

"Don't you believe it. They're not that kind."

"Probably not, but I wasn't taking any chances. I'm going outside a minute to see if I can see anything of them. Don't try to get away because you can't."

He was gone only a moment and when he returned it was with a puzzled look on his face.

"See them?" Gordon asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"But why all the trouble on your face. I thought you wanted them to come."

"But they're coming in the plane."

"Thought you fixed it so they couldn't. What did you do to it?"

"Took the brushes out of the motor."

"I'm afraid you're not so smart as I thought," Gordon grinned. "We've got several pairs of extra brushes along."

"I might have known it. Still, if they're going to hunt you up, there's no harm done."

"Not to the motor," Gordon grinned.

"You think they'll hunt till they find you?"

"Sure they will, but if you want them to find me why don't you get outside and let them see you?"

"You don't think I'm fool enough to do that I hope."

"Well, you see, I don't know a thing about it, the whole thing seems a bit foolish to me. Here you kidnap me and then say you want them to find me. What is it, a ransom game?"

"Never mind what it is. I want you to do just as I say. Do you understand?"

"Well, I've been pretty gentle so far, haven't I?"

"Because you had to be."

"What is it you want me to do?"

"Wait till I take another look outside and perhaps I'll tell you."

"Suit yourself," Gordon said as the Jap disappeared.

As before he was gone but a minute and when he returned it was with the news that they were flying in circles.

"That's to make a thorough job of it," Gordon told him.

"They won't see this hut unless they fly directly over it."

"Then let's hope that's what they'll do."

"It's some machine you've got," the Jap declared a moment later.

"You said something," Gordon assured him.

"I suppose those brass cylinders I stole the other day are some new kind of a battery."

"You suppose just exactly right. They are."

"Did you invent them?"

"No."

"Did the man you call Rogers?"

"No."

"Who did then?"

"Couple of friends of ours back in Maine."

"Boys?"

"About our age."

"They must be smart."

"They are."

"It must seem strange to be in a plane and not have it make any noise."

"It does till you get used to it."

"What are you fellows here for?" He abruptly changed the subject.

"I can't tell you that, not just now."

"You mean you won't?"

"That's about the size of it."

"I'll find out later."

"Which is on the knees of the gods," Gordon grinned. "But, I say, you've got that cord tied mighty tight."

"Does it hurt?"

"It's beginning to feel mighty uncomfortable."

"If I take it off will you give me your word of honor to do exactly as I order?"

Gordon hesitated a moment, then he shook his head. "Reckon not. I guess I can stand it a bit longer."

Again the Jap went outside and this time he was gone longer than on the previous occasions. "They're going to hit about right in about two more turns, I think," he announced when he came back.

"Suits me," Gordon said.

"You lie down on the ground close to the side there," the Jap ordered.

"What's the idea?"

"Never mind the idea. You do as I tell you, and when they come in here you keep perfectly still."

"You want them to think I'm dead?"

"No. I don't want them to know you're here."
"But they'll see me."

"I shall cover you up with a blanket."

"And suppose I don't keep still?"

"In that case you'll wish you had. If you do as you're told I promise that you'll not be hurt."

"How about my brother?"

"He won't either, unless he does something very foolish."

"And Rogers?"

For a moment the Jap did not answer.

"How about Rogers?" Gordon again asked.

"I make no promise in regard to him."

"Then I think I'll stay right here."

"And I think you won't. Come, they'll be here soon. Get down there before I have to hurt you. You can't help yourself you know and please don't make me resort to harsh means. It's so useless and unnecessary."

For a moment Gordon pondered the situation and was not long in coming to the conclusion that the other was right. He was completely in his power and might as well do as he ordered before he was hurt as afterward.

"You win again," he said shrugging his shoulders. "But I warn you not to hurt Rogers."

"I hope it won't be necessary," the Jap said drily.

CHAPTER IX

SOLVING A MYSTERY

"You follow me and don't make any noise if you can help it," Rogers said as he started to push his way through the dense growth.

"I'm right behind you," Bill told him.

It was hard work and they were obliged to literally force their way foot by foot so dense were the bushes. But, after what seemed a long time, Rogers gave a grunt of relief and, as Bill crept up, he saw that they had reached the hut.

"Regular Indian tepee," he whispered with his lips close to Rogers' ear.

"Guess we're on the back side," Rogers whispered back. "Listen."

For several minutes they listened with their heads close to the poles.

"Hear anything?" Rogers whispered.

"There's someone in there," Bill told him. "I've heard him move twice."

"I thought I did, but I wasn't sure. Follow me now and keep your gun handy."

Careful not to make the slightest noise they stole around the hut until they reached the path close to the doorway. Then they again stopped and listened. Yes, there was no doubt but that the hut was occupied.

"Keep your gun in your hand but hold it behind you," Rogers whispered as he stepped into the path and advanced through the open doorway.

It was rather dark inside as there was no window and at first he did not see the figure sitting on a box near the side directly opposite the door.

"I've got you covered and shall shoot if you make the least move," came a stern voice and as their eyes became accustomed to the faint light they saw the speaker and that what he said was true. "Drop your guns and raise your hands."

Both obeyed.

"Now come over to the center of the room. That's right."

"What's the idea?" Rogers asked, a slight smile on his lips.

"You'll know in a minute. What's your name?"

"Rogers."

"You lie."

"Perhaps in that case you'll tell me what it is," Rogers suggested.

"I will. Your name is Doctor Horn."

"What makes you think that?"

"I know it. You live in Honolulu."

"Pardon me, but you've made a mistake. I never was in Honolulu till the other day."

"Of course you'd say that."

"Because it's the truth."

"And you probably never heard of a Japanese named Ito Yoshihito."

"You're right, I never did. Who is he?"

"I am he."

"Well, I can't deny that."

"Because you know it's true. Now back out, both of you, outside where there is more light."

They backed out keeping their hands well above their heads and thoroughly convinced that they were in the hands of a crazy man.

"Now stop," the Jap ordered as soon as they were in the open where the sun struck down in the pathway. "Now look at that hand," he shouted holding out his left hand while the right kept a firm grip on the gun. "Is there any sign of leprosy there? Tell me, is there?"

"Why, not that I can see," Rogers assured him. "Of course I'm not a doctor as I told you but—"

"But less than three months ago you declared that I was a leper and ordered me deported to this island."

"You're crazy, man. I never—"

"Don't lie to me," the Jap interrupted. "I know what you did and why."

"Now see here," Rogers began, as a thought struck him. "Let's get this straight."

"Oh, it's straight enough," the Jap declared, but Rogers went on as though he had not spoken.

"You say that a doctor examined you and pronounced you a leper?"

"That is so."

"I don't dispute it," Rogers told him. "But it was not I. Probably it was someone who happens to resemble me and you've taken me for him. Now take a good look at me. No two men are exactly alike."

For a full minute the Jap looked fixedly at Rogers and Bill, watching with intense interest, fancied that a look of doubt followed by one of incredulity swept over his face. Then, suddenly, he dropped the gun and turned his back on them.

"Well?" Rogers asked after a moment had passed.

"You are right," the Jap declared, turning his face toward them. "You are not the man."

"You are sure of it?"

"I am sure of it. He has a slight scar on the side of his face. Except for that you look exactly like him."

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"Then it's indeed fortunate for me that he has the scar," Rogers smiled.

"It is," the Jap agreed. "But I owe you the most humble apology."

"No. It was a mistake and a natural one. But I do wish you would tell us all about it. But first, we are looking for the third member of our party. Have you seen him?"

"He is in there and safe."

"But I didn't—"

"No, you didn't see him because he's covered up. Gordon," he called.

But Gordon had been able to catch most of the conversation and now appeared in the doorway. "I thought it would be all right to come out," he smiled looking at his late captor.

"Certainly," the Jap cried, as he sprang to untie his hands. "And anything I can do to atone for—"

"That's all right, old man," Gordon declared. "I heard most of what you said and I don't believe that, under the circumstances, I would have been as patient as you have been. Shake."

Five minutes later they were all inside the hut and Ito was telling his story.

"A little more than three months ago," he began, "I was a happy man. I had worked my way through the University of California and was settled in a

business which was paying good money. But I had a partner who proved to be a bad man. We had the agency of the Buick car and were selling many and making big money. But he was mad that he had to divide with me and wanted it all. But I never suspected him of treachery until one day I spattered some acid on my hand and it made a number of sores. I showed him and he seemed very sympathetic. But a few days later a man came into the store and said he was Doctor Horn from the health department. He looked at my hand and said I was a leper and—well—what could I do?

"I told him what had happened to my hand but he claimed that I was telling a lie and that it was a clear case of leprosy. I had no one to whom I could go and he didn't give me time if I had. That very afternoon I was on a boat bound for Molokai."

"But the authorities here," Rogers said, "they must have known that it wasn't leprosy."

"Of course, but I suppose they were bribed. You see I was taken to one of the smaller houses in the colony and I don't believe the real authority knew that I was there. I was closely guarded by a real leper and I believe the idea was to impart the disease to me as soon as possible."

"What a fiendish scheme," Bill declared.

"Worse than that," Gordon added.

"But I managed to escape," the Jap continued, "and for more than two months I have been hunted. But they never found me and, pray God, they never shall."

"Amen," Rogers said under his breath.

"Well, the other day, I saw your plane and then I saw you and you can, perhaps, imagine my feelings when I thought I recognized you as the man who had sent me here."

"I don't know whether I can or not," Gordon told him.

"Only a few weeks ago I was a prosperous business man and now look at me," and the Jap glanced down at the rags which covered his body.

"It does seem as though you had had rather more than your share of trouble lately," Rogers sympathized. "But we're going to help you."

"You mean it?"

"Certainly."

"After the way I acted?"

"But we don't blame you a bit for that," Bill assured him and they all saw the big tears as they gathered in his eyes.

"Now, it seems to me that the best plan is to take you back to Honolulu and report the affair to the proper authorities as soon as possible," Rogers told them.

"But—"

"Will the plane carry all four of us?" Rogers interrupted, turning to Bill.

"We've never had four in her but he's not very heavy and I think we can do it. The only trouble will be in getting into the air. You see, there's no place smooth enough to get a running start and we'll have to depend on the elevator and—well, we can try it. If it'll lift us it will."

"And if it won't it won't," Gordon added.

"In which case one of us will have to stay behind," Rogers told them.

"Let's hope it won't be necessary," Gordon said.

"Well, the sooner we find out the better," Rogers declared as he got up from his box. "We'll get back to camp and get dinner and then start."

"Perhaps and maybe," Gordon added. "How about trying to make her lift us right now?"

"It's too rough around here," Bill told him.

"Then you and Steve take the plane back and we'll walk and here's betting we get there first," Gordon proposed.

He and the Jap started off at a fast run but the plane passed them before they had covered half the distance, and Bill had a fire going by the time they arrived.

"Now for it," Rogers said as they finished cleaning up after the meal.

"Just a minute till I put in some new cells," Bill called. "I reckon we'll need all the power we can get."

It was a tight squeeze in the back seat for Rogers and the Jap but they managed it and Bill started the motor. Notch by notch he pushed over the lever and faster and faster the propeller whirled.

"I've only got one more notch," he told Gordon who was watching the instrument board.

"And she hasn't budged," Gordon replied. "Well, give her the juice and let's know the worst."

Bill pushed the lever over to the last notch but, although the plane gave a lurch, it failed to rise. "Nothing doing," he said as he slowed the motor and finally brought it to a stop. "There's just a few pounds too many in her," he told them.

"Which means that I'm going to stay behind," Rogers said as he started to climb out.

"Just a minute," Gordon told him. Then, turning to Bill, he said: "If I get out and you get her off the ground and then start the other propeller, I believe I can jump on and she'll go. What do you think?"

"I think there'd be about one chance in a million," Bill told him.

"Make it two and let's try it."

"All right, I guess there's no particular danger only you want to be quick when the time comes."

"I'll be quick," Gordon promised as he climbed over the side of the cockpit.

The plane was resting on a slight elevation or knoll about thirty feet wide but the ground was very uneven especially right in front. As soon as Gordon was out Bill once more started the elevator and when he reached the next to the last notch the plane quivered and slowly left the ground.

"Hold her now," Gordon cried when the wheels were about a foot from the ground. "Now start the other motor and I'll hold her as long as I can and then I'll jump."

Bill did as ordered and the speed of the forward propeller increased until the plane began to move in spite of Gordon's efforts to hold it.

"I'm coming," he yelled as he gave a spring.

The plane gave a sudden side lurch and one of the wings brushed the ground, but the wheels did not touch the earth and the wing was not damaged. Another minute and Gordon had climbed over the side of the cockpit and the Albatross was twenty feet in the air.

"I told you," Gordon exulted.

"But no one but you would have thought of it," Rogers declared.

"And I don't think anyone else but he would have tried it even if he had thought of it," the Jap added.

"You'll give him a swelled head," Bill called back.

"He deserves it," Rogers declared. "I thought sure I was doomed to stay behind and I didn't want to a little bit and I don't mean maybe."

"She seems to be riding all right," Gordon told them as the plane passed out over the ocean.

"Oh, she'd carry twice this load once she got going," Bill declared. "And I imagine she'd have taken off all right if it had been smooth enough."

"I'll bet," Gordon added.

"A wonderful machine and it seems so strange not to hear a racket," the Jap said. "I've been up two or three times and I was nearly made deaf by the noise."

"Yes, it's some different," Rogers told him.

They were now flying smoothly at an elevation of about two thousand feet but there was a haze in the air and they were unable to see but a short distance.

"Don't get lost, Bill," Rogers said.

"I don't think I will," Bill told him. "But it isn't very clear up here."

"Sure you're going in the right direction?" Gor-

don asked. "Seems to me we're heading too far to the south."

"I think you're right," Bill agreed giving the wheel a slight turn. "I can't use the compass as I don't know the exact direction."

"Oh, well, it's only about thirty miles to the end of the island and I guess we can hit it all right," Gordon told him.

"But the air is a mighty big place," Rogers added.

"Seems to me we ought to be getting somewhere pretty soon," Bill declared ten minutes later. "We've been in the air twenty-five minutes and we've been making about sixty most of the time."

"I see it," Gordon cried, pointing off to his right.

"That's a bank of clouds," Bill told him.

"Bank of clouds your eye. I tell you that's land," Gordon insisted.

Bill had turned the plane a bit to the right as soon as Gordon had announced land and a few minutes later they saw that he had been right.

"You win as usual," Bill laughed.

"You mean I've got good eyes," Gordon laughed back. "That's one thing I am good at," he chuckled.

"I could mention one other thing," Rogers told him.

"And I can add a third," the Jap declared.

"My, but I'm getting all puffed up," Gordon

laughed. "Pretty soon I'll be thinking I'm some pumpkins."

"It's a good thing you made me change the direction when you did," Bill told his brother. "If we had kept on the way we were going I believe we'd have missed it."

"Maybe," Gordon agreed.

By this time they were over the land and Bill slowed down the speed as they knew the city was only a short distance away.

"Going to land where we did the other time?" Gordon asked.

"Guess that's as good a place as any if I can find it," Bill answered.

"Then you want to go a bit more to the left."

"Right again."

They could now see the city only a few miles ahead and a few minutes later the plane settled to the ground in the same place they had picked before.

CHAPTER X

THE JAP'S RETURN

SEVERAL people had seen the Albatross before it reached the ground and, as on the former occasion, a crowd soon collected about them. This was very annoying to the boys as both were anxious to accompany Rogers and their new friend and see that justice was done him. But to leave the plane unguarded with that crowd about was out of the question.

"I'll stay and watch it," Gordon volunteered.

"Wait a minute," Rogers told him. "Here comes a policeman. Perhaps we can make a dicker with him."

In this they were successful and for five dollars the officer agreed to stay by the plane and guaranteed that it would be safe. However, to be on the safe side, Bill took the cells and stuck them in his pocket.

"No use in taking a chance," he whispered to Gordon. "That fellow looks honest but you never can tell."

"Better to be careful than sorry," Gordon whispered back.

"Now, then," Rogers told the Jap as soon as they were away from the crowd, "I think we'd better go straight to the police station and tell our story to the head man. What do you say?"

"I agree with you," the Jap told him.

"You know where it is?"

"Sure. We can get a car right here that'll take us to within a block of it. There comes one now. Come on."

They boarded the trolley and a half hour later were asking for the chief in one of the finest police stations the boys had ever seen. They were obliged to wait a few minutes but soon they were ushered into an inner office where a tall man of middle age sat at a desk facing the door. His complexion was very dark and they at once took him for a native, although he spoke perfect English as he addressed them.

"And what can I do for you?" he asked pleasantly.

It had been agreed that Rogers should act as spokesman and he replied:

"My name is Rogers and I am a member of The United States Secret Service but, at the present time, I am on a vacation. These two boys are William

and Gordon Hunniwell, also of the States and this man is a resident of your city."

The boys noticed that when Rogers mentioned The United States Secret Service the officer became all attention and quickly arose and offered his hand to them in turn.

"Anything that I can do for you will be a great pleasure," he declared motioning for them to sit down.

"Thanks," Rogers said. "Chief," he continued as soon as he was seated. "We have a strange story to tell and one not easily believed," and went on to tell what the Jap had told them.

The officer listened without saying a word until he had finished. Then he said: "That doctor's name is Horn if I understood you correctly."

"That's right," Rogers told him.

"Well, I've heard of him although I do not know him, and he does not possess a very savory reputation. He's been mixed up in more than one affair that I don't believe would bear the full light of day, although he has never been arrested. One moment and I'll see if I can get him on the wire."

He hunted in a phone book for a moment and then, picking up the instrument, gave a number. There was a moment's wait, then:

"Is this Doctor Horn? Good, lucky for me I caught you in. This is the Chief of Police speaking. I want you to run around to the station for a minute. What's that? Well, that's too bad, but I'm afraid it'll have to wait. You'll be right round? Good. Be sure you don't forget."

He hung up the receiver with a smile. "He'll be here in a few minutes. His office is only three blocks away," he told them.

"You aren't afraid he'll try to beat it?" Rogers asked.

"Not a bit," the chief smiled. "He knows that a request to come here is an order and that if he didn't come he'd be arrested within an hour. He'll come. And I suggest that you wait in this other room," he said getting up and opening a door directly back of his chair. "I'll leave the door open a bit and you can hear what is said. Doctor Horn is, I suspect, a very smart man and a very slippery one, and if he saw you here he would undoubtedly deny any knowledge of the case, and I'm afraid that you would have pretty hard work proving that he did what you say he did. But I hope to be able to make him give himself away."

They followed him into the little room which was hardly more than a closet but it contained four chairs and the chief hoped they would be comfortable, and

returned to his office leaving the door open a few inches.

A few minutes later they heard the door open and the chief's voice as he greeted his visitor.

"Ah, good afternoon, doctor. I trust I have not too greatly inconvenienced you."

"It's all right," a deep bass voice replied.

"That's good. Sit down and I'll not keep you any longer than is necessary. What I want to ask you is whether or not you've had any experience with leprosy?"

"Why, yes, a little. We don't have many cases as you probably know," the man replied, in what seemed to the listeners, a relieved tone.

"That's true, thanks to you doctors. Now then, you know the disease when you see it, I suppose?"

"Certainly, it's unmistakable."

"So I've been told. Now did you ever send a patient to Molokai?"

"Only once, about three years ago."

"Not since then?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"Quite."

"Please be very sure your memory doesn't fail you," the chief cautioned him, "because I have a very

good reason to know that you sent a man there not much more than three months ago."

"Who says I did?"

"Never mind that. The fact is that you did."

"I did not."

"Think carefully."

"You don't suppose I'd forget a thing like that, do you?"

"It hardly seems likely, and yet—"

"I tell you I did not. It's been all of three years since I sent a patient there."

"I tell you frankly, doctor, that you had better come clean. It'll go much easier with you."

"But, chief, I can't say I did when I didn't."

Rogers and the boys had noticed that the Jap was having hard work to control himself as he listened to the conversation. Rogers, who sat close beside him, had laid his hand on his arm as if to reassure him, but the restraint was not enough for, as the doctor made the last denial, he leaped to his feet and, before they could restrain him, he had darted through the doorway.

"You lie," he shouted as he sprang into the room and confronted the astonished doctor.

But the latter displayed nothing but a natural astonishment.

"You sent me to Molokai three months ago and

you know it," the Jap cried shaking his fist at the doctor who was now regarding him with an amused smile on his face.

"I'm afraid, my friend, you will have some trouble in proving that," he declared.

"You deny it?" the Jap shouted.

"I most certainly do," the doctor replied calmly. "To the best of my knowledge I never saw you before."

Rogers and the boys had followed the Jap into the room and now Rogers whispered: "I'm afraid he can't prove it."

"Looks that way to me," Bill whispered back.

"How about it?" the chief asked the Jap, "Can you prove what you say?"

"I—I—" the Jap hesitated and Horn interrupted.

"He can't prove it and he knows he can't for the very good reason that it's not true. I believe blackmail is his game. If there's nothing else, chief, I'd like to go now. As I told you I have a very important appointment."

"All right, you can go, but before you leave, just let me give you a word of advice. From what I've heard of you you've been sailing pretty close to the wind on more than one occasion and my advice is that you be a bit more careful. I don't mind telling

you that in my opinion you're guilty of what this man accuses you, but I'm afraid he can't prove it."

"Any time you can pin anything on me you're welcome," the doctor almost shouted but his face was very red and they all saw that he was frightened.

"All right," the chief told him, "If I get the chance I'll do it and don't you forget it."

"I won't," the doctor promised as he turned and left the room.

"I guess I wasn't as smart as I thought I was," the chief declared as the door slammed shut. "I thought I could pin it on him but I didn't. He's a slick one, he is. Of course I believe what you say and there's no doubt in my mind that he did just what our friend says he did, but unfortunately he doesn't seem to be in a position to prove it and that's what counts in this business."

"It seems to me," Rogers said, "that his only chance now is with that partner of his, although I realize it's a pretty slim one at that. All he has to do is to say that he knows nothing about it and that's probably what he will do."

"How about the men who took him there?" Bill asked.

"Do you know who they were?" the chief asked turning to the Jap.

"I—I'm afraid not. You see it was at night and

I didn't get a good look at them," he stammered.

"But surely he can prove that he was received there," Gordon suggested.

"I'm not so sure about that," the chief told them. "According to what he says I doubt very much if the regular authorities ever knew he was on the island."

"I'm pretty sure they did not," the Jap agreed.

"Well, chief, what would you advise him to do?" Rogers asked.

"What kind of a man is this partner of yours?" the chief asked turning to the Jap.

"He's an American and I always thought he was a good fellow and square until he did this to me."

"But what's his temperament? Is he quick tempered or hard to get along with?"

"I never thought he was."

"Well, if you want my advice, I'd go and walk into the place without giving him any warning and see how he takes it. He'll most likely want to know where you've been and say how he's tried to find you and all that sort of thing. If he does I'd pretend that I didn't suspect him at all. Then I'd take the first chance that offers to get rid of him, either buy him out or sell out to him. But the most important thing just at present is that you don't want

to lose your share of the business. How does it strike you?" he asked turning to Rogers.

"I believe the plan is the best one under the circumstances. If you can't prove anything against that doctor I doubt if you can against him. I'd follow out that plan."

"But won't the doctor call him up and tell him that he's come back?" Gordon asked.

"Not if he's as smart as I think he is," the chief told him. "You see, a call can be traced and if we could prove that he did that we'd have a strong point in our favor. Of course he may not think of that but I believe he'll be sharp enough not to do it."

"Maybe he'll go around there himself," Gordon suggested.

"Just a minute and we'll be in a position to know if he does."

The chief pushed a button on his desk and a man in plain clothes entered.

"Jerry, did you see that fellow that went out of here a few minutes ago?" the chief asked.

"You mean that fellow you sent for?"

"That's the one."

"Sure I saw him."

"Just a minute. What's the address of your place?" he asked the Jap and, on being told, turned again to the other. "Go around there and watch if

he shows up. If he does try to find out what he says to the man in charge. You probably can't do it but there's just a chance."

Then he called the chief operator of the telephone company and gave orders that he be notified at once if any one called 1538, which the Jap had told him was the number of their phone, and gave the information that someone was back.

"There, we've laid the trap but I doubt if he springs it," he smiled.

"I agree with you," Rogers said as he got up from his chair.

They left a few minutes later and stopped for a moment on the pavement outside the station.

"Would you like us to go with you?" Rogers asked.

"I think it would be better for me to go alone, don't you?" the Jap replied.

"Frankly, yes," Rogers told him. "But, of course, we'll be very glad to go if you want us too."

"No, I think I'd better go alone. I have no fear as I can take care of myself now that I shall be on my guard."

"I'll tell the world you can," Gordon grinned.

"Boys, I think we'd better spend the night here. What do you say? We can put the plane in some garage and take in a movie to-night. Frankly, I'd

like to know how he comes out before we go back."

"No, no," the Jap insisted. "You've done too much already. Don't you bother any more."

"Of course we're going to stay," Bill declared.

"A movie to-night suits me down to the ground," Gordon added.

"Is there a hotel anywhere near where we left the plane?" Rogers asked.

"The Byscaine is only a couple of squares away?" the Jap told him.

"Good. Now you come there at ten o'clock to-night and we'll have a little talk. And now, if I were you, I'd get over to the place and see the partner as soon as possible."

"I can never repay you for what you have done for me," the Jap told them as he shook their hands.

"Forget it," Gordon told him.

"Hope he comes through all right," Bill said as the Jap disappeared around a corner.

"He will," Gordon assured him.

They caught a car a few minutes later and returned to the place where they had left the plane to find everything all right and a half hour later the plane was locked in the big garage of the Byscaine Hotel and they were enjoying the luxury of a hot bath. After supper they took in a movie and by half

past nine were back at the hotel waiting for their friend.

The Jap came shortly before ten and they knew at once that things had gone well with him.

"He did just as the chief said he would," he told them as soon as they were seated in one of the bedrooms. "Wanted to know where I'd been and told how worried he'd been and how hard he'd tried to find me. Of course he was very much astonished and very indignant when I told him what had happened to me, but I know he was lying all the time."

"I called the chief a few minutes before you came," Rogers told him, "and he reported that the doctor had neither phoned nor been around there. I guess that chief knows what he's talking about most of the time."

"I reckon he knows his callouses," Gordon told them.

"And you think that doctor is one of them, eh?" Rogers laughed.

"Well, a callous is a hard spot and, believe me, that baby is a hard one."

"And then some," Bill added.

They chatted together for an hour and then the Jap left after repeating again and again his gratitude for what they had done and making them promise

that they would see him again before they left for the States.

"Funny he never asked us what we were doing on that island," Bill mused as they were getting ready for bed.

"He asked me before you fellows met him," Gordon told them.

"Did you tell him?" Bill asked.

"Of course I didn't," Gordon replied, "He was an enemy then."

"I suppose he thought we would tell him if we wanted him to know," Rogers told them.

"Well, that's that," Gordon said as he jumped into bed.

CHAPTER XI

THE ALBATROSS FLIES ON ONE CELL

It was just after nine o'clock the following morning when the Albatross settled to the ground close by the camp.

"Here's hoping that no one has rifled the grub," Gordon said as he leaped to the ground.

"We've had enough interruption for a while and that's a fact," Bill told him as he hurried to the spot where they had cached their provisions. "Guess everything's all right," he announced a moment later after a hasty examination.

"That's good news," Rogers smiled. "Are we going to take the rest of the day off or are we going to get busy?"

"The rest of the day? Where do you get that stuff? The day is young yet," Gordon told him. "Of course we're going to get busy. What do you think we're here for?"

"How about the tide?" Bill asked as he glanced at his watch.

"Must be about half way out," Rogers told him.

"Then we'll have several hours," Bill said.
"Think it's safe for all three of us to go?"

"Lightning never strikes twice in the same place,"
Gordon told him.

"Meaning you think it's all right to leave things
to look out for themselves?"

"I'd say so. I don't believe anyone comes along
here once in a dog's age. But don't forget to hide
the cells."

"Why not take the plane and land it on the beach
where we want to start in and then we can keep an
eye on it," Rogers suggested.

"That's using the old bean," Gordon told him.
"And we won't have to walk so far either."

"Which sure appeals to you," Bill laughed. "But
I do think it's an excellent plan."

So a moment later they were again in the air
and soon dropped over the cliffs at the point where
the fissure was located. There was plenty of space
between the rocks and the water to land and, as the
tide was still going out, they felt safe in leaving the
plane.

"I'd like to take another look up this ravine be-
fore we do anything else," Rogers said as soon as
they were ready to start on the search. "From the
map I don't think it's likely that the place is there
but I'd like to look again just the same."

"Suits me," Gordon told him.

"And I suppose we're as likely to find it one place as another. A map as old as that one isn't likely to be very accurate," Bill added as they started off up the narrow defile.

"There's the rock that came pretty near putting me out of business," Gordon told Bill a few minutes later as he stopped and pointed to the stone which had fallen from the top of the cliff and had so narrowly escaped him.

"It would have done just that if it had hit you," Bill shuddered.

They spent nearly two hours hunting both sides of the ravine but found nothing and at last Rogers advised going back and starting over again on the cliff facing the ocean. "It isn't in here that's certain," he declared as he mopped his face.

"Well, we didn't expect it was," Gordon told him, "so we don't need to be disappointed."

"You sound as though you didn't expect to find it at all," Bill told him as they started back.

"Don't you believe it," Gordon retorted. "I didn't mean that at all. Of course we're going to find it. Have we ever fallen down on anything we've undertaken?"

"But there's got to be a first time," Rogers reminded him.

"I know, but this isn't going to be it," Gordon insisted.

"Got a hunch?" Bill laughed.

"Maybe," Gordon replied, returning the laugh.

By this time they had reached the entrance to the ravine and for a moment they paused looking both ways to make sure no one was in sight.

"Did you take the cells out?" Gordon asked Bill.

"I sure did," Bill assured him. "Don't catch me leaving them anywhere in it."

"Then let's go."

They walked slowly along the foot of the cliff keeping their eyes on the almost perpendicular walls that they might miss no single chance. About a quarter of a mile from where they had left the plane was a sharp break in the cliff and as soon as they rounded it they were out of sight of the Albatross, a circumstance which made them all a bit uneasy. But no one mentioned it, and they had proceeded nearly another half mile when Bill, who was a few feet ahead of the others, suddenly stopped and pointed to a spot on the wall about ten feet from the ground.

"What do you make of it?" he asked.

"Looks as though it might be a stone set in the face of the cliff," Gordon told him.

"That's what I thought."

"Where do you mean?" Rogers asked taking a step nearer the cliff.

"Right over your head," Bill told him. "Don't you see it?"

"You mean where that crack is?" Rogers again asked pointing.

"That's it."

"Well, all I've got to say is that you must have mighty sharp eyes to notice it," Rogers told them. "Of course I see it now but I never would have noticed it."

"What made me notice it is that it's a different kind of stone from the rest of the cliff," Bill told him.

"I believe you're right," Rogers agreed. "It does seem to be a bit darker in color, but the difference is so slight that not one in a hundred would have noticed it."

"Oh, Bill's got sharp eyes all right," Gordon told him.

"I'll say he has," Rogers agreed.

"Listen, now," Bill said as he picked up a stone about the size of his fist. "I'm going to hit the wall just beyond that crack and then I'm going to hit the other side of it and I want you to note if there's any difference in the sounds. Well, how about it?" he asked after he had made the experiment.

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"There was a difference," Gordon declared and Rogers agreed with him.

"I thought so myself," Bill told them, "But let's try it again."

They tried the experiment several times and they were all thoroughly convinced that the stone did not form an integral part of the cliff.

"That stone has been put there sure as you're born," Bill declared.

"And it must have been put there for a reason," Gordon added.

"I believe you're right on both counts," Rogers told them.

"And it looks to me as though we were at the end of our search," Gordon said.

"Don't be too sure of that," Bill cautioned him. "There's lots of room for a slip yet."

"Oh, I'm not counting any chickens before they're hatched," Gordon grinned. "But it looks hopeful, as the old maid said when a man tipped his hat to her."

"Well, the next question is how are we going to find out," Bill said.

"And rather a hard question at that," Rogers added.

"If that stone was set in there the fellow that did it sure did one mighty fine job," Gordon declared. "Look how fine the crack is all around it except on

that one side. Why, it must have taken him a long time to get it just the right shape."

"No doubt about that," Rogers told him, "But remember, he was hiding something very valuable and, according to his own account, he had lots of time on his hands."

"Well, it isn't getting us anywhere standing here talking about it," Bill told them.

"Action is what we want," Gordon added.

"Get up on my shoulders and hit it with a rock again," Bill said as he took his stand close to the wall.

"There's a hollow place behind it," Gordon assured them a moment later.

"Seems pretty solid, doesn't it?" Rogers asked.

"Sure does. But a crowbar might do the trick."

"A drill and a stick of dynamite would be better," Bill said as Gordon jumped to the ground.

"Neither of which we've got," Gordon declared.

"But I reckon we can get both in Honolulu," Rogers told him.

"Well, there's lots of time for that," Bill said. "Let's look around first and see if we can find anything nearer."

"You don't expect to find a crowbar lying around loose, do you?" Gordon laughed.

"Hardly that," Bill told him, "but we might find

a pointed stone which we could use. You see, it might not take much of a tug to get it out."

"It won't do any harm to try at any rate," Rogers said as he began looking around.

But it seemed that all the available stones were of the wrong shape until, after a search lasting all of an hour, Bill found one that he thought might answer. He was some distance from the others when he picked it up and shouted:

"Here's one."

The stone was about a foot and a half long and a couple inches wide and an inch thick except at one end where it tapered to what was almost a knife-like edge.

"It's got to come out mighty easy for that thing to do it," Gordon declared as he took the stone in his hand.

"I know it, but we can try it," Bill retorted.

"Sure we can," Gordon agreed handing the stone to Rogers, "Hand it to me when I get up on Bill's shoulders," he told him. "All right," he said a moment later, "let's have it."

"Work it easy, now," Bill cautioned.

It was an awkward place from which to work as he had to reach above his head, but he soon had the edge of the stone in the crack and began to pry.

Snap.

"I told you so," Gordon said as he jumped to the ground. "That thing snapped as soon as I put the least pressure on it."

"The stone didn't move any before your crowbar broke, did it?" Rogers asked.

"Not a move," Gordon told him.

"Well, I guess we'll have to get the proper tools before we can accomplish anything," Bill said.

"Anyhow it's about time for dinner," Gordon reminded him.

"That tummy of yours," Bill laughed.

"Well, it's most two o'clock, and—great guns, look at the tide."

So intent had they been on their occupation that they had completely forgotten all about the tide and now they were astounded to see that the water at points was almost at the bottom of the cliff.

"We've got to hustle if we want to get around the point without having to swim," Bill shouted as he started off on a run.

"We're not going to do it without getting our feet wet," Gordon told him as he fell in at his side.

"We'll be lucky if that's all we get wet," Rogers added close behind them.

"Suppose the plane's all right?" Gordon panted when they were about half way to the point.

"I'm not so sure," Bill told him. "But it won't

be long if it stays where it is, that's certain."

"We're going to get wet all right," Gordon declared a moment later as they came near the point and he could see the surf breaking on the rocks.

"Well, it won't be the first time," Bill puffed. "The only thing I'm worrying about is whether or not the water has reached the plane."

"We'll know in a minute," Rogers told him.

"It's a good thing there isn't much wind," Gordon said as they reached the point and started to wade.

They rounded the point without getting into the water above their knees, and Bill gave a sharp cry as he saw the plane about a quarter of a mile down the beach.

"The water has got it all right and we've got to make it in nothing flat if we're going to save it," he yelled as he increased his speed.

There was need of haste for the water had not only reached the plane but had gone so far beyond it that every wave, as it rolled in, was rocking it violently. There were, they knew, a number of rather large rocks near where they had left it and the great danger was that it would come down on one of them and be damaged. They could see that the surf was washing nearly to the foot of the cliffs. Indeed, there was only a narrow strip of beach left where they were at the moment and

opposite the plane the cliff came down nearer the ocean.

"Gee, but this tide sure does come in fast when it gets started," Gordon panted running close behind Bill.

"Seems that way," Bill flung back.

"We may have to pull her up in the ravine."

"Not a chance."

"Guess you're right. I reckon the water comes up too far."

The plane was swishing about in a foot or more of water when they reached it and they lost no time in getting a hold on it and pushing it toward the cliff.

"Think we can make it from here?" Gordon asked when the plane was only a few feet from the cliff.

"Guess so. Jump in and we'll make a stab at it," Bill told them.

The plane was now situated so that the water reached it only when the surf rolled in and then it was not deep enough to move it. In a minute they were all in their seats and Bill was slipping one of the cells in its place in the motor which ran the elevator. But when he felt in his other pocket for the other cell he caught his breath.

"'Smatter?'" Gordon asked.

"I've lost one of the cells," Bill told him.

"You can't have," Gordon insisted.

"Perhaps I couldn't but I did. It must have slipped out that time I tripped and fell just after we rounded the point."

"Slip it in the other motor and we'll see if we can take off the regular way," Gordon advised.

"Impossible," Bill told him. "Too many rocks in the way."

"What'll we do then?"

"I was thinking that perhaps we could put the cell in that motor and jockey down to the path in front of the camp and then we could pull her out."

"Better make it snappy then," Rogers spoke for the first time. "We'll have to run through some water as it is, I'm afraid."

By the time he had finished speaking Bill had changed the cell and a moment later pushed over the switch. As he had said there were too many rocks of large size along the beach in that particular locality to enable him to run fast enough to allow of a hop off, but by running slowly he believed he could steer by them. He turned the wheel as the plane started and it swung out toward the ocean and almost at once was in a foot or more of water.

"Why didn't you turn the other way?" Gordon shouted.

"Wasn't room," Bill retorted.

"Look out or you'll swamp her."

"I'm doing the best I can."

"Don't I know it?" Gordon cried.

The plane was now headed the other way and moving slowly toward the cliffs. Then, without warning it gave a sudden lurch and they could feel the wheels settle down as the plane came to a sudden stop.

"Struck a hole," Gordon announced.

"How'd you guess it?" Bill smiled as he began speeding up the motor.

Faster and faster whirled the propeller, but the plane did not move even when he had the switch on the next to the last notch.

"I'm afraid to give her the last notch," Bill said.

"How come?" Gordon asked.

"It's likely to strain her," Bill told him. "There must be a rock or something in front of one of the wheels, maybe both."

"I'll see," Gordon told him as he leaped over the side of the cockpit. "I'll say there is," he announced a moment later after a hasty examination. "And it's too big to move, must weigh a ton."

"If we get out do you think we can push her back?" Rogers asked.

"Just a minute till I see what's behind," Gordon told him. "It's in a pretty deep hole but maybe we can do it," he told them.

Rogers and Bill were out by the time he had finished speaking, the latter having shut off the power when Gordon got out. But, light as was the plane in comparison with other planes, it was too heavy for them to move under the circumstances.

"She's wedged in there for keeps, I'm afraid," Bill panted, shaking his head.

"Let's put the cell in the other motor and see if she'll go up straight," Gordon suggested.

"Won't do any harm to try," Bill agreed as they climbed back.

"I was afraid it wouldn't work," Rogers said a few minutes later, after Bill had turned all the power into the elevator.

"Maybe if you and I get out she'll do it," Gordon proposed.

"It's worth a try," Rogers agreed.

"Wait a minute till I slow her down a bit," Bill ordered.

Thus lightened the plane gave a lurch when Bill pushed the switch to the last notch and the next instant it shot up into the air, and reached an altitude of nearly a hundred feet before he could get the motor slowed down.

"That did the trick," Gordon declared, looking up at the plane.

"Sure did," Rogers agreed.

"But look," Gordon cried, "the wind's taking him out."

"And pretty fast, too," Rogers agreed.

So intent had they been with the problem of getting the plane out of the hole none of them had noticed that the wind had strengthened and was blowing directly off shore.

"He's still going up."

"Wonder what his idea is."

"Maybe he thinks he will strike an ocean breeze if he goes up far enough."

As each in turn expressed an opinion the plane was rapidly mounting and soon it was up so high that it looked hardly larger than a small bird. Then, suddenly, Gordon gave a gasp.

"I believe he's falling."

"Nonsense," Rogers told him.

"I tell you he is," Gordon insisted, and Rogers could no longer deny it.

Down plunged the plane, gaining speed rapidly, and Gordon groaned in anguish while Rogers placed his arm about his shoulders in an effort to comfort him.

"What could have—"

But he never finished the sentence. The plane was only a few rods from the surface of the water when they saw that the forward propeller was revolving and just before the plane touched the water it had gained enough headway to arrest its downward plunge and in another minute the danger was passed and the Albatross swept over their heads with Bill leaning over the side of the cockpit waving his hand at them.

"Do you know what he did?" Gordon gasped.

"Started the propeller by the force of the air," Rogers answered him.

"Not a bit of it. You can't start an electric motor that way."

"Gee, that's so. I never thought of that, but you don't mean—"

"But that's just what he did. He changed that cell to the other motor while the plane was falling and, thank God, he got away with it."

"Who'd have thought of it but he?"

"And who else would have had the nerve to try it if he had?"

"Who indeed?" Rogers echoed. "But, I say, we've got to beat it and beat it quick."

"I'll say so," Gordon agreed as they started on a run through the water which was now well above their knees.

The plane was circling around overhead and, as they looked up, they saw that Bill was motioning to them to hurry.

"I'm afraid he's going to have trouble in landing," Rogers panted as they hurried along side by side.

"Probably that's what he is trying to tell us," Jack replied.

The water by this time was touching the foot of the cliffs every time a roller ran up the beach and they knew there was one place just before they reached the path where it would be much deeper and they also knew that the depth was increasing every minute.

"We may have to swim," Gordon said.

"Guess it won't be that deep," Rogers replied.

And he was right, for although the water reached well above their waists, they were able to keep their feet, and a moment later were running up the pathway toward the camp. As they reached the place Bill flew by scarcely ten feet over their heads making as little speed as was possible to keep the plane in the air.

"Going to hit just beyond the camp," he shouted.
"Stand by to help put on the brakes."

"Give us time to get set," Gordon shouted back and Bill waved his hand to tell them that he understood.

"He'll hit right about here," Gordon told Rogers indicating the place. "And we want to stand right here," he continued taking his position about twenty feet from the landing spot. "He won't be going very fast and it's up to us to catch hold of the plane and stop it before it hits those rocks, and it's going to be some job.

"We'll have to catch hold of the tips of the wings," Rogers said.

"I reckon."

"Think we can reach them?"

"Come to think of it I doubt it. We could reach them perhaps but there's nothing to get a grip on. No, we'll have to let them go over us and grab hold of the sides of the cockpit."

"That's my idea. Here he comes."

The plane was only a short distance away and they could see that Bill had shut off the motor and that the propeller had nearly stopped. Then the plane struck the ground and they ducked. A moment later and the plane rolled between them and they grabbed for the sides of the cockpit. Fortunately they both got a good hold and, although they were swept from their feet, their weight helped and the plane came to a stop just six inches from a large rock.

CHAPTER XII

HARD WORK

“ANYBODY hurt?” Bill shouted as he leaned over the side of the cockpit.

“All right here,” Rogers cried as he slowly got to his feet.

“Same here,” Gordon declared. “But I wouldn’t want to do that for a steady diet.”

“We were lucky,” Bill told them.

“I call it skill,” Gordon grinned.

“Well, take it all round, I guess we got out of a bad fix rather handily,” Rogers told them.

“But, boy, I thought it was all up with you when I saw you coming down out there,” Gordon said and Bill saw that there were tears in his eyes.

“You thought I had lost control?” he asked.

“Sure did.”

“How did you think of it?” Rogers asked him.

“Of changing the cell?”

“Yes, of changing the cell.”

“Seems to me it was a natural thing to think of under the circumstances,” Bill told them, “But, to

tell the truth, I didn't think of it until I was up pretty high. I went up hoping that I'd strike a wind in the other direction. But I didn't. The higher I got the harder the wind seemed to be blowing and it was carrying me right out to sea. So I did the only thing there was to do."

"But suppose—" Gordon began, but Bill interrupted.

"No use in supposing. There wasn't one chance in a hundred that I couldn't do it."

"But you didn't have much room to spare," Rogers reminded him.

"Well, a miss is as good as a mile, you know and all's well that ends well, so let's not worry any more about it," Bill smiled.

"No, let's get dinner," Gordon added.

"You aren't hungry?" Bill laughed.

"I'm always hungry."

"Don't I know it?"

"A body'd think you never got hungry," Gordon declared as he started gathering wood for the fire.

"I guess I usually manage to put away my share," Bill laughed.

"I suppose we'll have to take a trip over to the other island after dinner," Rogers suggested a few minutes later.

"Think we better wait till to-morrow?" Bill asked.

"What for?" Gordon demanded. "We've got to go so why not to-day?"

"Guess we might's well," Bill said putting some potatoes in the pot.

"You know what I'd like for dinner?" Gordon asked.

"That's easy, square tails," Bill laughed.

"What's a square tail?" Rogers asked.

"Bill, he doesn't know what a square tail is."

"Gee, I guess I'm in wrong now," Rogers grinned.

"But no harm done," Bill assured him. "A square tail is a trout, one of the kind that have colored spots on them."

"Is there any other kind?" Rogers asked.

"Sure there is. There's a kind that we call a crotchtail that have no spots. Some call them togue."

"They're the lazy fellows," Gordon explained. "You have to fish down deep for them and it's about as exciting to catch one as it is to hook a good big sucker. They won't fight, but they're mighty good eating, just the same."

"Some time I'm coming up to Maine and go fishing with you," Rogers promised.

"And we'll show you some fishing that is fishing," Gordon told him. "Get a five pound square tail on a five ounce rod and, oh boy, ain't we got fun."

"An eight pounder is better," Bill added.

"Too large for a beginner though," Gordon insisted.

"Perhaps you're right about that," Bill smiled. "I reckon we'll have to start him on the little fellows."

"Kid me all you want to, but I'm coming just the same," Rogers assured them.

"And you'll be as welcome as flowers in May," Gordon told him.

As soon as they had cleaned up after the meal they started for Honolulu after the implements they needed and had no difficulty in finding what they wanted. It was time to get supper when they got back and they decided not to visit the cliffs until the following day.

"Seems to me that about all we do is to get meals," Bill growled as he started the fire.

"Too bad we haven't a cook along," Gordon told him.

"What's the matter with the one we've got?" Rogers wanted to know.

"Oh, he's all right," Gordon grinned, "Only if we had a regular cook we wouldn't have to take so much time from our work."

"Well, we have to wait on the tide anyhow, so what's the odds?" Rogers said.

"I didn't think of that," Gordon declared. "Guess we might's well let the old one stay on."

"Maybe he'll go on a strike first thing you know," Bill broke in.

"Don't mention anything so serious as that," Rogers laughed.

"Just think," Gordon remarked as they were sitting by the fire a couple of hours later, "to-morrow at this time we may have the job all cleaned up and be ready to start for home."

"And then again we may not," Gordon reminded him. "Something tells me it isn't going to be so easy."

"Another hunch?" Rogers smiled.

"Maybe," Bill smiled back.

"Don't you think we've found it?" Gordon asked.

"Maybe and maybe not. I'll tell you what I think after we get that stone out," Bill told him.

"Huh, anyone can tell then," Gordon told him.

"But no one can tell a thing about it till then. Of course we can guess and if you want mine you can have it."

"Shoot."

"Well, I guess it's the place and that we'll find the platinum."

"That goes here too," Rogers added.

"But it doesn't mean anything?" Gordon asked looking from one to the other.

"Nary thing," Bill assured him.

"Well, I've got a hunch that your guess is right so I'm going to bed and sleep on that idea," Gordon told them as he got to his feet.

"Hope you don't have any nightmares," Bill told him as he too got up and stretched. "Reckon I'll turn in too."

"And here's where I make it unanimous," Rogers added as he threw a big junk of wood on the fire.

"How do you suppose that hole got there?" Gordon asked after they were all rolled in their blankets.

"Probably an ant dug it." Bill told him.

"Thanks, I just wanted to know," Gordon replied.

"No trouble," Bill assured him.

"I've got a theory."

"So have I."

"What's yours?"

"That I'm going to sleep if you'll let me."

"Go to it," Gordon snapped.

They were up with the sun the next morning and breakfast was over and the dishes washed long before the usual time. No one said a word about the work of the day until they were ready to start. Then Gordon asked:

"How about leaving the plane here this time and walking?"

"Did you hear what I heard?" Bill asked looking at Rogers.

"You think your ears fooled you?"

"Well, strange things happen but I never thought I'd hear the kid suggest a thing like that."

"Come, cut out the comedy. Anybody'd think that I never walked. Are we going to take the plane or are we going to walk?" Gordon demanded.

"We're going to walk," Bill told him.

"Right, that's all I wanted to know."

"We found the plane somewhat in the way yesterday and—"

"No excuses are necessary," Gordon interrupted. "Didn't I suggest leaving it here? Come on."

They divided up the load they were to take with them and set off in high spirits. Gordon was especially elated over the prospect of an early and successful termination to their quest and insisted that they were going to find the platinum that very morning.

"It's fine to be young and hopeful," Bill told him, "But I wouldn't get my hopes up too high if I were you."

"Well, I don't believe in hanging crape all the time."

"Neither do I, but—"

"All right, let's talk about something else," Gordon

interrupted. "Think we're going to have a hard winter?"

"Tell you later about that," Bill laughed.

The tide was at its lowest point when they reached the place and there was a space of about a hundred feet between the cliffs and the water.

"We've got about five hours," Rogers said as he dumped his load on the sand.

"One'll be enough," Gordon assured him.

"Here's hoping," Bill added. "Now, how are we going at it? We ought to have brought along a short ladder. Think you can manage it on my shoulders?"

"Of course I can," Gordon replied. "Steve, you hand me the bar when I get up. All right, let's go."

But it was not the easy task he had thought it would be. He was in a difficult position in which to use the crowbar although he had little difficulty in inserting the end in the crack. But, pull and tug as he might, the rock would not budge.

"Guess it's stuck in there harder than I thought," he panted after several attempts.

"And you aren't getting any lighter all the time," Bill reminded him.

"The fellow that put that rock in there sure did know his pebbles," Gordon declared as he jumped to the ground. "It's no use trying that any longer."

"It's funny what holds it," Rogers said.

"Maybe it's sort of rusted," Gordon grinned. "It's been there a long time, you know."

"Well, I reckon we'll have to try the dynamite," Bill declared.

"Good thing you've got a good understanding, Gordon," Rogers grinned.

"What do you mean understanding?" Gordon demanded.

"Why, what you've been standing on."

"Oh, Bill's shoulders."

"That's it."

"Well, the understanding is going to get wobbly if he sticks up there as long this time as he did the last," Bill told them.

Among other things they had purchased a couple of long drills and a hammer, and now Gordon, again perched on his brother's broad shoulders, started the job of drilling a hole in the cliff. Of course he took advantage of the crack but, even so, it was slow work and he was obliged to stop several times to give the understanding a rest. Once Rogers insisted on taking his place but it was the first time he had ever served in that capacity and the result, as Gordon put it, wasn't all that could be desired.

"As a regular fellow you're A number one," he told him, "but as an understanding you're a flat failure."

This opinion was expressed after Rogers had dumped him off three times. Bill again assumed the task and Rogers looked on with amazement to see how steadily he held him. It had seemed easy before he tried it but now he realized that it took a certain amount of skill. He felt a little better about it after Bill told him that he and Gordon had done a good bit of tumbling and that standing on one another's shoulders was one of the best things they did.

"I'll give you some lessons sometime," Bill promised.

"I'm afraid I'm too old a dog to learn a new trick like that," Rogers told him.

"Jimminy, but this rock is hard," Gordon grumbled as he jumped to the ground to give Bill a rest.

"How much you got done?" Bill asked.

"About half, I'd say."

"And you've been about an hour. Aren't you getting hungry?"

"I'll say I am."

"And it's only nine o'clock," Bill laughed.

"Is that all? I thought it was 'most noon. It is by my stomach anyhow."

"Nothing unusual about that," Bill again laughed.

"I'd like to know how that fellow ever got that rock up there," Gordon said a few minutes later as they were again resting.

"Very likely it wasn't so high up at that time," Rogers told him. "You know the shore line changes more or less and the sand may have washed away several feet here. Probably, if this is where the stuff is, that hole wasn't more than a foot or two from the ground then."

"And I sure wish it wasn't now," Bill declared as he set himself once more.

"Well, you haven't got a thing on me," Gordon told him as he swung up to his position.

"Maybe not, but I've got something on myself all right," Bill chuckled.

Shortly before ten o'clock Gordon decided that he had drilled enough and that he was going to call it a job. By this time the tide had come in until the water was only a few feet from where they were standing and, after a short consultation, they decided to wait until afternoon before setting off the charge of dynamite.

"We've got to go before long anyhow if we're going to get back without wading and no knowing what we're going to get in to when we blow it," Rogers told him. "Anyhow, there's no great hurry

about it and we'd better wait till we have plenty of time. By three o'clock this afternoon we can come back and work till dark if we want to."

"Guess you're right as usual," Gordon grinned, "But I sure am in a hurry to shoot off that charge. It'll be just our luck if some fellow comes along and swipes that hole I've drilled."

"I guess the hole'll be safe," Bill told him as he began picking up their tools.

"Well, let's hurry back and—"

"Get dinner," Rogers finished.

"How'd you know that was what I was going to say?" Gordon demanded as they started off on the return trip.

"Ask him something sensible," Bill broke in.

"Pardon me, but it was Steve I asked," Gordon told him.

"My mistake," Bill laughed.

"Well, I'm pretty good at guessing," Rogers explained.

"A wizard, I'd say," Gordon grinned.

"I agree with you," Bill laughed. "It's the last thing I'd have thought of."

"Smarty."

"You bet."

But by the time dinner was ready they all con-

fessed that they were half starved, and a little later Rogers declared that they had eaten enough for a dozen ordinary men.

"Now there's nothing to do but twiddle our thumbs till the tide goes out," Gordon grumbled after the dishes were washed.

"It might be worse," Rogers told him.

"Such as what?" Gordon demanded.

"Well, someone might steal the hole."

"Which would be a catastrophe," Bill declared.

"For your shoulders?" Gordon asked.

"You said something."

"Well, I guess it's about time to start," Gordon suggested a while later.

"It's only one o'clock," Bill laughed.

"Get out with your kidding," Gordon told him pulling his watch from his pocket. "Why, what's the matter with this watch? It's stopped. No it hasn't either," he said, holding it to his ear.

"What time have you got?" Bill asked him.

"Five minutes to one."

"Which is just one minute too fast."

"Is that right, Steve?"

"Just right by my time," Rogers told him.

"Can you beat it?" Gordon sighed as he returned the watch to his pocket.

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"We should have brought a checker board along,"
Bill said.

"I wish to goodness we had," Gordon told him.
"Think I'll read a bit if you fellows don't mind."

"Go to it," Rogers told him.

CHAPTER XIII

A RESCUE

THREE o'clock came at last although Gordon had declared a dozen times that all their watches must have stopped.

"My, but they sure do have long days out here," he said as he closed his book and jumped to his feet. "It's ten minutes to three and I'm going to start tide or no tide."

"Then I guess we might as well trail along," Bill said as he picked up his load.

They walked slowly down the pathway leading to the beach and had covered about half the distance when Bill called their attention to a plane flying at a high altitude and well out over the ocean.

"He's coming this way," he declared.

"You mean that eagle?" Gordon asked him.

"What do you mean eagle? I'm talking about that plane out there."

"Which happens to be an eagle. No it isn't either. It is a plane sure enough."

"I told you that in the first place. And what's more it's a bi-plane."

"Wonder who it is," Rogers mused. "Hope it isn't anyone coming to see us."

"Say," Bill cried a minute later, "he's having trouble of some sort."

"You bet he is. He's lost control," Gordon cried pointing toward the distant plane.

"And what's more, he's falling," Rogers added.

They could now see that the plane had gone into a tailspin and was falling rapidly.

"Funny he doesn't straighten out," Bill gasped.

"Can't, probably," Gordon told him.

"Gee, but it's too bad," Rogers groaned.

But just then they saw a tiny speck leave the plane and a moment later a parachute opened just as the plane struck the water.

"He'll probably be drowned," Gordon said.

But Bill was already racing back toward the camp as fast as he could run.

"He's going out in the Albatross," Gordon declared and started back to join him.

By the time Gordon had reached camp closely followed by Rogers, Bill had the cells in place and was climbing over the side of the cockpit.

"Here, I'm going with you," he shouted.

"Make it snappy then," Bill ordered.

"How about me?" Rogers asked.

"Make too much weight," Bill told him.

"I guess you're right, but I hate to have you go without me."

"Don't worry about us, we'll be all right," Bill assured him as he started the motor.

"Don't take any chances that you can help," Rogers called after them as the plane rose from the ground.

Gordon waved his hand in answer and a moment later Bill started the forward propeller. Rogers watched them as the plane started for the ocean and then he too started in the same direction. "If anything happens to those two boys I'll never forgive myself," he muttered as he ran.

"See anything?" Bill asked as the plane swept out over the water.

"Not yet," Gordon told him as he scanned the water through the glass.

"You'll have to look sharp I guess. I imagine the plane is at the bottom before this and I don't know whether the parachute will stay on top the water or not. Most likely he's swimming around somewhere if he can swim."

"And he'll make a pretty small mark to find."

"Right, so strain those eyes for all they're worth and don't miss a thing."

"That's what I'm doing. But you're going too far to the right, unless I'm away off."

"Think so?"

"I know it. Quick, to the left."

"See him?"

"I think so. Now you're going right, but get down a bit lower."

"How about it?" Bill asked a moment later after he had brought the plane down to within a hundred feet of the water.

"It was a seal," Gordon told him.

"Sure?"

"Of course I—no it isn't either. There he is right ahead of us."

Another moment and the plane was hovering over the swimmer who had now seen them and waved feebly.

"He's about all in," Gordon declared. "Get down, quick."

Rapidly as he dared Bill allowed the plane to settle toward the water and soon they were only a few feet above the waves. Then, without saying a word to him, Gordon plunged over the side and disappeared. Lightened so suddenly the plane seemed to leap upward and for a moment Bill had all he could do to control it. But soon he had brought it down close to the water again and

was anxiously gazing over the side of the cockpit.

Gordon, watching the swimmer, had seen him, after a second despairing wave of the hand, sink from sight and knew that there was but a single chance. He struck the water head first and about twenty feet, as near as he could judge, to the right of where the swimmer had disappeared. As he came to the surface he looked in that direction and, to his joy, saw a head bob up about twenty-five feet away. But before he could reach the spot the head had again disappeared and, taking a long breath, he plunged downward. Down he swam with powerful strokes until it seemed that he must have gone far enough. He knew that a human body sinks but slowly and the one he was after had but a short start. But he could see nothing.

"I'll go a little farther," he thought. But just then his eyes caught sight of an object a few feet to his left and slightly above him, and a moment later he was moving upward his left hand grasping the figure by the collar of his shirt.

It seemed as though his lungs would burst before his head bobbed from the water and allowed him to draw the lifegiving air into them. His burden was, he judged, unconscious, and holding the head out of water he glanced about for the plane. But Bill had seen him and the Albatross was only

a short distance away and moving toward him.

He saw that Bill had already thrown a rope over the side and in another minute he had grasped it.

"Keep the plane up and I'll get the rope around him," he shouted. "He's not heavy and you can pull him up if you're careful."

A moment later and the form was drawn from his arms and, treading water, he watched as Bill drew it slowly up and finally over the side. He had been obliged to increase the speed of the elevator to counter-balance the increase of weight and the plane was now nearly a hundred feet above the water. But Gordon had no fear regarding his own safety as he knew he could easily swim ashore if necessary. So he waited calmly for the plane to settle down again. Down it came and he could see Bill as he leaned over the side letting out the rope.

The rope had nearly reached him when there was a slight sound just ahead which caught his ears and, looking up, he saw a triangular fin cutting through the water and but a few feet away.

"Quick, Bill, there's a shark," he shouted.

Even as he yelled his hands grasped the rope and he began to pull himself from the water. But his weight was pulling the plane down and, as he afterward told Bill, it seemed as though he would never get above it. And the shark was coming with the

speed of an express train. But Bill had, the instant Gordon had the rope in his hands, thrown the lever over to the last notch, and nobly did the plane respond. Then came a flash of white as the monster turned to grasp his prey and for a second Gordon gave himself up for lost.

But he managed to jerk his body sideways and the shark missed but by so close a margin that the boy's right foot was brushed by the slippery side of the shark. Before the fish could turn for another rush Gordon was safe and mounting the rope hand over hand.

"Talk about your narrow escapes," he gasped as he drew himself over the side of the cockpit.

"Just by the skin of your teeth," Bill told him, "But, thank God you made it."

Then, as Bill started the forward propeller, Gordon turned his attention to the one he had saved. The body was lying across the rear seat face down and, as he turned it over, he gave a gasp of surprise.

"Great guns, it's a girl."

"Sure is," Bill told him, "See if you can get any water out of her. I'm afraid she's pretty far gone."

It was an extremely narrow place in which to work but Gordon knew that it was a time when a minute might mean a life and he at once set to work while Bill headed the plane for the shore. Getting his

hands beneath the girl's body he slowly raised it up and was rewarded by a small expulsion of water from her mouth. Again and again he repeated the movement and each time a small amount of water came from her mouth, but there were no signs of returning life. But now Bill was bringing the plane down over the camp site and soon Rogers lifted the body from the plane and placed it on the ground.

"She's alive," he declared a moment later.

"You sure?" Gordon asked anxiously.

Rogers had been awaiting them with his medicine kit ready and now he forced a strong stimulant between her teeth, and a moment later her eye-lids quivered and they knew that they had won the battle against death.

An hour later, wrapped in heavy blankets, she was sitting near the fire sipping hot soup and stopping every few minutes to tell the boys how brave they must have been and how grateful she was. She was a very handsome girl but little more than twenty years old and had told them that her name was Laura Mann. It seemed she lived in Honolulu and her father was a wealthy merchant of that city. She had been flying for more than two years and this was the first serious accident she had encountered.

"My engine went dead when I was up ten thousand feet and to make matters worse, one of the

wing stays snapped and I guess I must have lost my head for a minute. Fortunately father never would give his consent to my flying ambition until I promised that I never would go up without a parachute strapped on," she explained.

"It surely saved your life that time," Rogers told her.

"But it came very near not doing it at that," she smiled. "You see, I didn't jump soon enough and the result was I hit the water pretty hard and it rather knocked the breath out of me and left me pretty weak. If it hadn't been for that I could have swam ashore easily."

"Provided a shark didn't get you," Rogers said gravely.

"Not much danger of that," she smiled.

"But one nearly got Gordon," Rogers told her.

"Not really?"

"Very really," he assured her.

"Then I owe you a lot more than I thought I did," she said turning to Gordon who was blushing violently.

"You, you—" he stammered, but she cut him short.

"If you say anything like what I know you were going to say I'll think that you don't consider my life worth saving."

"Then I won't say it," Gordon blushed.

"Don't mind his blushes," Bill laughed. "He's mighty bashful."

"But you must tell me all about the shark," she insisted again turning to Gordon.

"There's not much to tell," he declared. "But I guess I did have a pretty close call," and he told her what had happened.

"I should say you did have a close call," she said when he had finished.

"I suppose your parents will be worried about you before long," Rogers ventured.

"I'm afraid they are right now," she told them.

"Do you feel strong enough to let us take you home?" Bill asked her.

"In your plane?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, I'm all right," she assured them. "What make of plane have you?"

"Well, it's our own make," Bill told her.

"You mean you made it all?"

"All but the motor. We bought that."

"I suppose it's a Liberty."

"No, it's an electric motor."

"You—why, you must be the boys who won the race across the United States," she declared.

"They sure are," Rogers assured her, "and take it from me, they're some boys."

"I believe you. And you'll take me home right now?" she asked turning to Bill.

"Certainly, if you're sure you're strong enough."

"Let's go."

It was nearly dark when the Albatross settled gracefully to the ground directly in the rear of a large mansion in the outskirts of the city. The plane had been sighted in time for a considerable crowd to gather and it was surrounded by people all eager to know if there was news of the missing girl. When it was seen that she was a passenger a great shout of joy rose and as she jumped from the cockpit she was clasped in the arms of her parents.

"Can't we get away right now?" Gordon whispered.

"Afraid not," Bill whispered back.

"Let's make a try," Gordon insisted.

"All right. You get in and I'll follow," Bill told him.

But the ruse failed of its purpose for Laura was even then leading her parents to them and, whether they liked it or not, they were obliged to submit to the praise and thanks of not only her parents but of many others as well. Laura and both her parents insisted that they remain with them all night, but the

boys assured them that it was impossible on account of their friend, Steve.

"He'll be worried sick if we don't get back to-night," Bill told them.

They finally made their escape but not until they had promised to return within the next few days.

"Well, we got out of that better than I expected," Bill declared as soon as the plane was headed back toward Molokai.

"I do hate that hero stuff," Gordon said.

"But if you will do such things you must expect to be thanked, you know."

"I suppose so."

"She's a pretty girl."

"Is she?"

"And she's as nice as she is pretty."

"Think so?"

"Don't you?"

"Haven't thought much about it."

"Then take it from me."

"I'll do that."

"Funny she didn't ask us what we're doing on that island," Bill said a few minutes later.

"I thought of that. And her folks didn't seem inquisitive either."

"Guess, maybe, we didn't give them time."

"Wouldn't wonder. They'll probably want to know when we see them again."

"Some home they've got."

"Some is right."

"They seemed like nice people."

"Sure did."

By this time it was pretty dark but they were not afraid of losing their way as they knew Rogers would have a big fire going to guide them. And a few minutes later Gordon announced that he could see it.

"Got her home all right?" Rogers asked as they jumped out.

"Safe and sound," Gordon told him. "How about supper?"

"All ready."

"Lead me to it."

CHAPTER XIV

THE SECRET OF THE HOLE

“WELL, I wonder what will happen to interrupt our work to-day.”

Bill was frying flap-jacks and Rogers had gone to the brook for water while Gordon was making the coffee. It was Gordon who made the remark.

“It won’t take us long to find out what’s what if we don’t get stopped again,” Bill told him as he flipped a cake in the pan.

“Honest injun, Bill, do you have the least idea that we’re going to find anything?”

“How do I know, I—”

“I didn’t ask you what you know. I asked what you think.”

“One think’s as good as another, I guess,” Bill laughed. “Wait till we get that rock out and I’ll tell you.”

“That’ll be mighty kind.”

“What do you think about it?”

“I think it’s a pretty long shot.”

“You don’t think we’ll find any platinum?”

"Not a bit."

"Well, we've had a pretty good time anyhow."

"And met a pretty girl."

"Rather."

It was after seven o'clock, but on account of the tide they had slept later than usual and were in no hurry. But breakfast was ready when Rogers returned with the water, and they took their time eating.

"Suppose we don't find the platinum in that hole," Gordon suggested, "Are we going to hunt any more?"

"I don't think it would be much use," Rogers told him. "To my way of thinking that's the place all right. Of course whether or not there's anything there is another thing again. But just the same, between you and me we're going to find it and we're going to find it right there."

"Hope you won't be disappointed," Bill told him.

"Well, it won't be the first time if I am, and it probably won't be the last."

"What time is it?" Gordon asked.

"Why don't you look at your watch," Bill asked him. "You're always asking the time with a watch right in your pocket."

"Just habit, I reckon," Gordon told him. "What time is it?"

"Half past eight," Bill told him.

"Thanks, you're a minute and a half slow."

"Well, use your own watch after this," Bill laughed.

"And we've got to wait another hour," Gordon groaned. "Hang that old tide."

"Better read another chapter in your book," Rogers suggested.

"I believe I will."

"What a calm," Bill laughed as Gordon settled down with his book.

Finally the time came to start and they once more got their tools together and set off.

"Probably we'll see a ship on fire or a whale with a sore toe," Gordon declared just before they reached the shore.

"That last would be a sight worth seeing," Rogers told him.

"Well, it's going to take something unusual to stop me this time and I don't mean maybe."

"That goes for me too," Bill added.

The tide was out just far enough to allow them to walk along the foot of the cliffs without getting their feet wet. They were all anxious to know what they would find in the hole and so hurried as fast as their legs would take them without actually running.

"The hole's still there," Rogers announced as soon as they had reached the place.

"It's a wonder," Gordon told him.

It took them but a few minutes to place the charge and fix the fuse.

"Directions say this fuse burns a foot in two minutes," Bill told them. "Suppose we make it about four feet long. That'll give us plenty of time don't you think?"

"Sure it will," Gordon told him.

So Bill cut the fuse and a moment later lighted the end. He waited until he was sure it was burning and then started after the others who were already some distance away. They ran along the edge of the water until they had covered a distance of some two hundred yards.

"Guess we'll be safe enough here," Rogers said as he sat down on a rock.

Gordon had his watch out and was watching the time. "Four minutes," he announced.

"And four to go," Bill added.

"Three minutes."

"And five gone."

"Only one left."

"Ten seconds. Wonder what has—"

But then the explosion came and they saw the

rock fly from the face of the cliff and land in the water at least twenty feet away.

"That part was a success anyhow," Bill declared as they started back.

"Yep, it came out all right," Gordon agreed.

As they approached the spot they could see that there was a hole in the cliff about two feet in diameter but they could not tell how far back it extended even when they stood directly beneath it.

"Give me a leg up and I'll take a look," Gordon suggested.

A moment later he was on Bill's shoulders peering into the hole while Bill and Rogers held their breath waiting for the word which would tell them of success or failure. But it seemed a long time before Gordon spoke.

"Just as I thought," he finally told them as he jumped to the sand.

"You mean there's nothing there?" Rogers asked and his voice trembled as he put the question.

"Not a thing," Gordon told him.

"How deep is it?" Bill asked.

"About two feet."

"But it doesn't seem possible," Rogers told them. "That rock was fixed in there by someone and why did he do it if it wasn't to hide something?"

"That's a mighty hard question to answer," Bill told him. "It doesn't seem reasonable."

"Want to take a look?" Gordon asked Bill.

"I'd like to if you think you can hold me."

"Sure I can. Hop to it."

A moment later he jumped off Gordon's shoulders and confirmed his announcement.

"It's as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard," he declared. "Get on my shoulders and take a look," he ordered Rogers.

"Guess I'm too heavy," Rogers objected.

"Nonsense. Help him, Gordon."

It took some time and a couple of spills but finally he stood on the firm shoulders and saw for himself that the hole was indeed empty.

"Well, it's a great disappointment," he said as he stood on the sand again. "I was dead certain that we'd find it there."

"We aren't greatly disappointed," Bill told him. "You see, we didn't really expect to find it."

"You didn't?"

"Not really."

"Well, it's some consolation to know that you're not disappointed," Rogers said slowly. "But all the same, I don't understand it."

"Don't understand what?" Bill asked him.

"Two things. First I don't understand why you

didn't expect to find the platinum in that hole and then I don't understand why it isn't there."

"Of course we can't answer the last but, you see, it was so long ago and—"

"But what if it was? Platinum doesn't spoil."

"I know that, but it evidently disappears," Bill smiled.

"But it's funny," Rogers told them. "As I said before, someone went to a lot of trouble to make that hole and to fix that rock there, and why did he do it? If he put the platinum there and someone else found it and took it away, why did he go to all the trouble to put the rock back?"

"We'll probably never know the answer," Gordon told him as he began picking up the tools they had brought with them. "Guess we might's well be getting back."

"It isn't time for dinner yet," Bill reminded him.

"Are we all agreed that it would be a waste of time to hunt any more?" Rogers asked.

"What do you think?"

"I think it would be. I'm sure that that is the place where the stuff was hidden."

"I agree with you on both counts," Bill told him, and Gordon nodded his head in consent.

"Then there's nothing to do but pack up and start back home," Rogers told them.

"That's about all, I guess," Bill agreed, "Except that we've got to make a call in Honolulu."

"You mean on that girl?"

"On her parents. We promised we would," Bill told him.

"Of course you won't see the girl," Gordon grinned.

"Of course not," Rogers laughed.

Although he was trying his best not to let them know how bitterly disappointed he was, both the boys knew that the failure to find the platinum had been a hard blow to him. They knew that he was far from being a rich man and had expected much from the venture. But all the way back to camp he kept up a lively conversation and tried to appear in good spirits. But they could see that it was forced and wished they could do something to make it easier for him.

It was after ten o'clock when they reached camp and they at once set to work packing up for their departure, although they had decided not to start until after dinner.

"We might as well have dinner early," Gordon suggested as he finished rolling his tent.

"I was expecting something of the sort," Bill told him.

"Well, we don't want to get over there just at supper time, do we?"

"Sure not. Start the fire going and I'll get busy even if it isn't eleven o'clock yet," Bill laughed. "What'll it be, canned lobster or corned beef?"

"Lobster for me," Gordon told him, and Rogers voted the same way.

Dinner was rather a quiet meal. In fact there seemed to be little to say. The boys longed to console their friend but hesitated to do so as they knew he was trying to keep his disappointment from them and would feel all the worse to know that he was not succeeding. So the subject of the platinum was not mentioned while they were eating. Although no one had said anything in particular about it as if by mutual consent they hurried to clean up as soon as the meal was finished and, shortly after one o'clock, were ready for the hop.

"Honestly, boys, I think you had better leave me here and stop for me on your way back," Rogers told them when all was ready.

"Nothing doing," Bill told him. "You're going with us or we don't go at all."

"That final?" he asked.

"That's final," Gordon assured him.

"Then I'll go of course, but I hate to be a wet

blanket at a party and you may have suspected that I'm not feeling exactly what you'd call jovial."

"Who'd a thunk it?" Gordon laughed. "Honest injun, Steve, as a crape hanger you'd make a good end man. You couldn't be a wet blanket if you tried."

"But I'd counted a lot on this thing and—"

"Don't we know it?" Bill interrupted. "But we've done our best, you know, and—"

"And failed," Rogers finished the sentence for him. "And now the chapter is closed and we'll not say anything more about it. We've had a good time and I wouldn't have missed this trip with you boys for a farm and so I'm mighty glad we came and—and that's all there is to it."

It was exactly half past one when the Albatross rose in the air and the plane carried a crew which was, so far as outward appearances went, in a joyous mood. Not a breath of air disturbed the ocean beneath them as they swept out over its broad expanse and headed for Honolulu.

"Know what day it is?" Bill asked as soon as they were over the water.

"Friday, isn't it?" Gordon guessed. "At least it ought to be," he added.

"And the thirteenth at that," Rogers smiled.

"Well, you're both wrong," Bill told them.

"What day is it then?" Gordon demanded.

"It's Saturday and the date is the tenth."

"Which means that we don't start for home till Monday," Gordon declared.

"Exactly," Bill agreed.

"I reckon he planned it so that he could stay longer with, er, with Mr. and Mrs. Mann," Gordon grinned turning to Rogers who, as usual, was in the back seat.

"Probably you're right," Rogers told him.

"A lot of planning there's been so far as time is concerned," Bill retorted. "But have all the fun you want to at my expense. I don't mind it."

"Then what are you blushing so for?" Gordon asked.

"Who's blushing?" Bill demanded.

"Ask Steve, he knows," Gordon laughed.

"I guess it's nothing but tan," Rogers smiled.

"Maybe, but I'd like to take his temperature just the same. I'll bet the mercury would jump out the end of the thermometer."

"Keep it up," Bill told him.

"Hope I never fall in love," Gordon said in an undertone but loudly enough for both of them to hear.

"You probably never will," Bill told him.

"It must be awful."

"Ask Steve, he knows," Bill advised.

"It's not so bad," Rogers laughed, "when you get the right girl."

"But how do you know when you do get the right one?" Gordon wanted to know.

"You'll know all right when the time comes," Rogers assured him.

"Anyone will be the right one for Gordon provided she's a good cook," Bill chuckled.

"You said a mouthful," Gordon grinned.

"Wonder how the Jap made out," Rogers remarked a few minutes later.

"Perhaps we'll get a chance to make a call on him while we're visiting," Gordon said.

"We must try to," Bill added.

"Yes," Rogers agreed. "I'd really like to know that he's all right. I sure took a fancy to him."

"Same here. He's a regular fellow if his skin is a bit on the yellow shade," Gordon told them.

All this time the plane had been skimming along at about seventy-five miles an hour and only a few hundred feet above the water. They knew there was no hurry and the day was too fine and the flight too pleasant to make speed. But finally they were hovering over the lot in back of the mansion, and the elevator was slowly allowing the plane to approach the ground.

"There's Laura," Gordon announced when they were nearly down.

"Guess she must have been expecting us," Rogers chuckled.

"And there's the rest of the family," Gordon said as he saw a man and a woman emerging from the rear of the house.

They were greeted most heartily by the entire family and made to feel at home at once. In spite of their evident great wealth and high position the boys knew that they were just plain people, the kind they liked. Two men, who evidently worked about the place, rolled the plane into the commodious garage a hundred feet back of the house, and Rogers and the boys followed their hosts into the house.

The house was most luxuriously furnished but with such excellent taste that there was no hint of ostentation. A hot bath was most grateful to all three, and a little later they sat down to a meal which, as Gordon afterward declared, was in entire keeping with the house.

"Those biscuits were pretty nearly up to your standard, Bill," he whispered as they left the dining-room an hour later.

"All they needed was a square tail to go with them," Bill whispered back.

Seated on the broad porch Rogers asked Mr.

Mann if he knew of their Jap friend and was told that he knew of him although he had never met him. Then Rogers told him the story of their meeting.

"Suppose we have the car around and run over and call on him. I know they usually keep open until nine o'clock or later."

"Just what we'd like, eh boys?" Rogers replied.

"You bet," Gordon told him.

They found their friend in and delighted to see them again and were happy to learn that things had come out splendidly.

"I bought my partner out two days ago and he left for the States yesterday," the Jap told them.

Sunday morning they went to Church with the family in spite of their insistence that they had no decent clothes to wear.

"Doesn't make a mite of difference," Mr. Mann assured them. "We're rather a free and easy lot here and your clothes will attract no attention."

After dinner the car was brought around and they enjoyed a long drive about the city and outlying country.

"It's most as good as Maine," Gordon whispered to Bill as they returned to the house.

"But not quite?" Bill smiled.

"No place can be quite as good as home," Gordon told him.

"And square tails," Bill chuckled.

"You're getting your figures of speech mixed," Gordon told him.

"Thought you'd appreciate it," Bill smiled.

It was sometime in the night that Bill's sleep was broken by a violent jab in the side.

"What the dickens?" he grunted.

"Listen."

"Where's the fire?"

"There isn't any fire, but I'm a chuckle headed idiot," Gordon told him.

"That's no news, but why wake me up to tell me about it? Afraid you'll recover before morning?"

"Listen, Bill. I woke up a few minutes ago and was thinking and it came to me all of a sudden."

"What came and why?"

"Why how we made a mistake about that platinum."

"You mean you think it's there?" Bill was wide awake now and sitting up in bed.

"I don't know that, but I'm sure we overlooked a bet."

"Where?"

"In that hole."

"Nonsense."

"'Tisn't nonsense. Do you remember how the bottom of it looked?"

"Why, no, not particularly. Seems to me it was kind of sandy looking."

"That's just it, it was sandy. In fact it was covered with sand."

"Well, what of it?"

"My, but you're dumb. Why didn't we look under that sand?"

"Brush it away, you mean?"

"Sure, why didn't we brush it away?"

"I'll bite. Why didn't we?"

"I told you why I didn't. Because I'm an idiot. You can draw your own conclusions in regard to yourself."

"Well, it isn't too late."

"But don't you think it's a possibility?"

"That the platinum is there?"

"That's what I meant."

"Of course it's possible."

"And we'll go and take another look?"

"Of course."

Rogers occupied another room and so they had to wait till morning before telling him of their new idea, and after talking it over for a few minutes longer, they turned over for another nap.

CHAPTER XV

CONCLUSION

"You mean you think there's a chance that we overlooked it?"

Rogers asked the question of the boys as they were sitting on the porch the following morning waiting to be called to breakfast. Gordon had told him what he had told Bill during the night and he was all excitement in an instant.

"I think there is," Gordon told him.

"But rather a small one I'd say," Bill added. "Of course, as Gordon says, there's a chance that there's another hole under that layer of sand, but my advice is that you don't get your hopes up again. Of course we'll stop there on the way back and see what there is to see, but you mustn't be disappointed if nothing comes of it."

"But that sand didn't get there by itself, that's certain, and so it must have been put there for a purpose and what other purpose could there have been?" Rogers demanded.

"That's what we're going to find out," Gordon told him.

The evening before, in answer to a rather broad hint given them by their host, they had told him their story and Mr. Mann had agreed with them that it was a pretty long chance. He had, however, sympathized with them over their failure, and they had agreed not to mention their new purpose.

"We've got enough grub in the plane to last a couple of days, haven't we," Bill asked just as the breakfast bell sounded.

"Sure we have if we don't eat too much," Gordon told him as he got up from his chair.

"It wouldn't make any of us one bit mad if you folks would make up your minds to stay with us a few days," Mr. Mann told them as they took their seats at the table.

"It's mighty kind of you to ask us," Bill replied, "but we've really got to go."

"Stay over one day and I'll take you down to the south shore and show you some surf board riding that'll make you sit up and take notice," he coaxed.

"Please do," Laura added her invitation and Mrs. Mann was no less insistent.

"Well, I don't know," Bill hesitated. "What do you say?" he asked turning to Rogers.

"I guess we can spare one more day," he said.

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"How about you, Gordon?"

"I'm for it. I've never seen a real surf board rider and I've always wanted to."

"Then we'll consider it settled," Mr. Mann smiled. "About ten o'clock is the best time and I think I can promise you some fun."

"Bill was all right," Gordon whispered to Rogers a few minutes later as they were leaving the house for the porch, "until the girl put in her two cents' worth."

"But I thought you were keen for it," Rogers told him.

"Well, I am in a way, but I think we ought to get back there as soon as we can. Suppose someone finds that hole and goes to poking around in it."

"Oh, I guess there's no danger of that," Rogers told him. "We didn't see a soul about there except the Jap all the time we were there. It'll be safe enough, I reckon."

"I suppose it will only—"

"Only what?"

Bill had lingered behind a few minutes to speak to Laura and had joined them just in time to hear Gordon's last words.

"Nothing," Gordon told him.

"Didn't you want to stay?" Bill demanded.

"Sure he did," Rogers broke in. "Only he's afraid

someone will get ahead of us over on the other island."

"Of course I want to stay," Gordon added. "It'll probably be the only chance we'll ever have to see real natives ride surf boards and I wouldn't miss it for the world."

The sight was all their host had promised and for fully two hours they watched the riders of both sexes as they raced in on the long swells.

"Gee, but I'd like to have a try at it," Gordon declared.

"It takes a lot of practice to do it right," Mr. Mann told him.

"To do it at all, I'd say," Bill declared.

"Few white people ever get the knack," Mr. Mann said. "Of course, after a little practice one can do something at it but it seems to take a native to do it right."

"I imagine it's some different from riding a board after a motor boat," Rogers declared.

"Well, yes, I reckon it is," Mr. Mann told him. "The hard part of it seems to be to hit the wave at just the right second and that's what counts."

"Well, I'm mighty glad we stayed," Gordon said as they started back.

"So say we all of us," Bill added.

They were treated to another long ride in the after-

noon and they were forced to acknowledge that they had never seen more beautiful scenery.

"Not a bad place to live, is it?" Mr. Mann asked as they rolled into the driveway shortly before six o'clock.

"It's wonderful," they assured him.

"But you ought to see Maine in the summer time," Gordon added.

"I've never been there," Mr. Mann told them, "But it's possible that we may see it next summer."

"If you do you must come to Skowhegan and make us a visit," Bill quickly told him and grinned as he caught the wink which Gordon gave Rogers.

"We surely will do that very thing," Mr. Mann assured him.

It was just nine o'clock when they took off the following morning after bidding farewell to their new friends and exacting another promise that they would come to see them the following summer if it were at all possible.

"Nice people," Rogers declared, as the Albatross rose in the air.

"And then some," Bill added as he headed her nose toward Molokai.

"Father, mother and—ahem—daughter, all of them," Gordon agreed.

"You said it," Bill told him. "She's a fine girl and I don't care who knows it."

"She'd be prettier if she had a bit more nose," Gordon suggested.

"What's the matter with her nose?" Bill demanded.

"Nothing, what there is of it," Gordon laughed.

"Well, I guess it suits her all right."

"And somebody else as well," Gordon again laughed.

"Looks to me as though it was going to rain," Rogers changed the conversation. He did not realize how dear the two boys were to each other and sometimes feared lest real offense might be given when they were kidding.

"Does look a bit thick off there," Bill agreed.
"Hope it holds off till we land."

"It's going to take more than rain to keep me away from that hole," Gordon told them. "Believe me, I'm anxious to find out if my hunch is in good working order."

"You didn't say you had a hunch. I thought it was just an idea," Bill told him.

"Is there any difference?" Rogers wanted to know.

"Sure there is," Gordon told him. "A hunch is an idea with a college education."

"Then I hope this one of yours went to a good college," Rogers laughed.

"You'll have to wait a bit after we get there, rain or no rain," Bill said a few minutes later. "It'll be just about high tide when we land."

"That old tide again," Gordon groaned.

"Which waits for no man," Rogers reminded him.

"It's going to rain all right," Bill declared just then as a drop of water struck the wind shield in front of him.

"Just a shower, I reckon," Rogers told him.

But a few minutes later the rain was coming down in torrents and the visibility was so poor that they could see but a short distance ahead.

"Better slow her down or we'll be going past without seeing it," Gordon cautioned.

"We're only making a bit over thirty now," Bill told him.

"Then the wind must be pretty strong," Rogers suggested. "It seems to me as though we were going pretty fast."

"We aren't nearly there yet," Bill declared.

"Some shower, if you ask me," Gordon declared.

But it turned out that Rogers was right. It was only a shower, and a few minutes later the sun burst through the clouds and the rain stopped so suddenly

that Gordon declared someone must have turned off the spigot.

"Is that our island?" Gordon asked pointing straight ahead.

"Unless I got lost in the rain it is," Bill told him.

"Well, I guess you didn't because those are our cliffs all right."

"And right over there is where our hopes are," Rogers smiled pointing a bit to the right.

"Tide's in all right but I reckon it's on the turn," Gordon told them.

"Which means that we'll have time to get some dinner," Bill laughed.

"I sure do like that statement," Gordon assured him.

A few minutes later the plane settled to the ground at their old camping ground and they jumped out and at once began getting things in shape for the meal.

"Doesn't look as though there'd been anyone here," Gordon announced as he looked about.

"I guess there doesn't anyone come here very often," Bill told him.

"It isn't a very inviting place to come to," Rogers added.

It was nearly two o'clock when they started out

for the hole in the cliff and Gordon hurried them along so fast that Rogers was panting heavily when they reached the spot.

"I'll have to go into training if I'm going to follow you fellows about much," he declared.

"Quick, Bill, give me a jump up," Gordon ordered and Bill hastened to take his stand beneath the hole.

In an instant Gordon was on his shoulders and then the sand began to fly as he brushed it out with both hands.

"Go easy there," Bill gasped stepping back a pace and nearly upsetting his burden. "I'm getting the most of that sand down the back of my neck. Don't brush it out so hard and then it'll fall down straight."

"Don't be so particular," Gordon called down, "There isn't much more. There, I told you so."

"Found something?" Rogers asked eagerly.

"Looks like it. There's a crack here in the floor that makes almost a square, but I've got to have something besides my fingers to pry it out."

"How about the bar? I brought it along, you know."

"Hand it up and I'll give it a try but I don't believe it will work."

"Crack too small?" Bill asked.

"Afraid so," Gordon told him as he reached for the bar which Rogers was handing him.

It required several minutes for Gordon to work the end of the bar into the crack, but he finally accomplished it and in another minute he dropped a flat stone about a foot and a half long and a little more than a foot wide to the ground.

"Get a bit nearer, Bill," he called and a moment later added: "It's here all right, but I don't know's I can lift it out alone."

"What is it?" Both Bill and Rogers asked the question in the same breath.

"It's a wooden box and it's sure some heavy," he told them panting as he tugged with both hands. "Steady now, and don't spill me if you can help it. Here, Steve, get under it and I'll ease it down to you."

The box was in a fair state of preservation as they found upon examination, although the cover was rotted a bit on one side.

"Just a minute," Rogers cried as Gordon was about to use the bar in prying off the top. "Do—do you suppose we're going to find the platinum in there?"

"Best way is to get it open and find out," Bill told him.

"Go ahead."

The cover flew off and three pairs of eyes peered eagerly at the contents.

"I reckon we've found it," Rogers said as he stooped and picked up a small lump of what looked like a fragment of nickle.

"Is that platinum?" Gordon asked as he too picked up a piece.

"Well, I never saw any unrefined platinum," Rogers told him. "And, of course, I can't be certain, but what else could it be? No one took all that trouble to hide something that wasn't pretty valuable."

"Sounds reasonable," Bill told him.

"Let's get it back to camp and I'll get my lab to working and we'll soon know what it is," Rogers told them.

"We'll take turns carrying it," Bill proposed. "Help me get it up on my shoulder and I'll take the first whack."

Changing the load at short intervals they made easy work of it and half an hour later Rogers was busy getting his chemicals and apparatus ready.

"I'm not much of a chemist," he told them, "But I studied up on this thing and don't believe I'll have much trouble."

"You better hadn't," Gordon warned him. "We don't want to cart home a lot of worthless stuff."

"I'll do the best I can. Believe me, I don't want to get my hopes up again and get fooled. Now here's

the nitric acid. We'll pour some out in this beaker and put a lump of the stuff in it and see if it has any action on it. If it's any common metal it will dissolve. Where's that little stove that uses that solid heat of yours? I want to warm the acid to make sure."

Gordon soon found the little stove and a moment later they were eagerly watching the experiment.

"Not a sign of any action," Gordon declared after five minutes had passed.

"Which makes it look encouraging," Rogers told him. "Now we'll try some hydrochloric acid."

The result was the same with the latter acid and the hopes of all three were at fever heat as they watched the experiment.

"Now we'll try the aqua regia and see if that dissolves it," Rogers told them as he mixed the two acids.

"It should, shouldn't it?" Bill asked.

"If it's platinum, yes."

How they all stared as he dropped a small lump into the mixture and how they cheered a moment later as they saw it slowly grow smaller and finally disappear.

"I guess that settles it," Bill cried.

"Just a minute. There's one more test to make to be sure," Rogers told him as he diluted the mixture with some water. "If it's platinum this solution of

ammonium chloride, which I have in this bottle, will precipitate it."

Again they held their breath as he poured some of the solution into the beaker, but their joy was unbounded as they saw the dark colored precipitate thrown down and Rogers told them that it was the precious metal beyond the shadow of a doubt.

"Now I reckon we can enjoy the flight home," Gordon declared catching his cap on the back of his head as it descended from the height to which he had thrown it.

"It's dead certain that I'm going to," Rogers assured him. "Boys, this means a lot to me."

"And I reckon we can use our share," Bill grinned.

"Well, I guess we'd better plan to spend the night here and get an early start in the morning," Rogers suggested.

"It doesn't make so much difference when we start," Bill told him. "We'll have to fly part way in the dark anyhow unless we hit full speed about all the time and I don't like to do that unless we have to. But we ought to take a couple of hours or so and go over the plane and be sure that everything is all right before we start so I'm in favor of doing as you suggest. What do you say Gordon?"

"Suits me. We don't want to have trouble with the motor on the way back, that's certain."

"Then I'll get the tents up while you two are doing the work on the plane," Rogers said.

"I'll say it's a lucky thing we did look it over," Gordon declared an hour later.

"Found something wrong?" Bill asked looking up from the commutator of the elevator motor which he had been examining.

"Here's a wire that's all but broken and if it had given out while we were in the air—well, we'd have had to come down, that's all."

"But this other motor would hold us up," Bill told him.

"I forgot about that one for the minute, but this would have given out before we had gone a hundred miles or I'm no mechanic. Looks to me as though there must be too much vibration here. No wonder," he added a moment later. "This motor is all but loose."

"I'll say it is," Bill agreed after a short examination. "It needs some new bolts in there. Wonder if we've got any."

"I'll look and see."

After a long search Gordon found the bolts and started in to replace those which were worn. It took considerable time as they were hard to get at and supper was ready by the time he had finished.

"Where are we going to hide that stuff?" Bill

asked later as they were sitting around the fire. "We don't want to have it stolen now that we've got it."

"Who's going to steal it?" Gordon demanded.

"I don't suppose anyone is," Bill told him. "But, just the same, we're going to hide it and, what's more, we're going to set a watch to-night."

"That's fool—"

"I think Bill's right," Rogers interrupted. "Of course," he explained, "there's not much chance of anyone coming around here to-night, but it's possible, and that platinum is altogether too valuable to take the slightest chance with."

"I guess you're right at that," Gordon agreed. "It's only for one night anyhow."

Before going to bed they packed everything which they did not need, including the platinum, in the plane as they planned to be off by four o'clock, and before nine o'clock Rogers and Bill were asleep leaving Gordon to stand the first watch until eleven. It was a beautiful night after the shower of the morning and the sky was studded with stars, and a great sense of pleasure took possession of the boy as he sat with his back to a large rock only a few feet from the plane.

"It's all a bunch of foolishness sitting up here," he told himself as he glanced at his watch and saw that it was half past ten.

But at that moment he changed his mind. A slight sound off to his left caught his ear and he quickly sprang to his feet every sense alert. For a moment he stood perfectly still and listened. Then he heard it again. It was only a faint sound as though someone were stepping on a loose stone but it told him that some kind of an animal was near. There was no moon and, in spite of the stars, he could see but a short distance. Then he heard a whisper and knew that the animals were men. How many there might be he could not tell but that there was more than one was certain.

He hesitated no longer but dropped to his knees and crept quickly toward the tents about thirty feet away. There he shook Rogers and Bill at the same time whispering to them to keep quiet.

"There are some men close by," he told them.

"You sure?" Bill, now fully awake, asked.

"Yes, I heard them talking."

"Did you see them?" Rogers whispered.

"No, it's too dark."

"We'd better get over close to the plane," Bill told them. "Never mind the tents: we can leave them if we have to."

A moment later they were crouching close to the plane and straining their ears to catch the slightest sound. But none came and Bill was on the point of

telling Gordon that he must have been mistaken, when the latter whispered:

"I saw one of them then. Look over there by that rock. See him?"

"Yes," Bill replied.

"And there's another just to his right."

"And another one about ten feet to his left," Bill whispered.

"Like as not there's a dozen of them," Rogers added.

"Get in the plane, quick, and don't make any noise," Bill ordered.

"Going to take off?" Gordon asked.

"If we can," Bill told him.

"Make it snappy then. They're coming nearer."

"All set?" Bill asked a minute later.

"All set," both Rogers and Gordon told him.

Bill started the elevator and at the same instant, as though it had been a signal, there came a shout and a rush of dark forms.

"They're coming," Gordon cried, at the same time firing his automatic into the air.

He hoped that the shot would scare them but it only seemed to increase their speed and now they could see that there were at least a half dozen men rushing the plane. Bill had the switch on the last

notch by this time and the propeller was spinning but the plane did not rise.

"They'll get us if you don't hurry," Gordon cried again firing a shot over the heads of the men.

"She's got it all," Bill replied and just then the plane gave a slight lurch and the wheels left the ground.

But two of the men were close at hand and, before the plane had risen far enough to escape them, they had grabbed hold of the side of the cockpit one on either side, and for a second it seemed they would pull the plane back to the ground. But Gordon on the one side and Rogers on the other brought the handles of their guns down on two separate heads and both men dropped without a sound as the plane seemed to leap into the air.

"Good work," Bill cried.

"But, believe me, it was touch and go for a second," Gordon told him.

Down below they could hear the shouts of angry men whose prey had escaped them and for a moment they feared lest they would fire at them. But no shots came and, as Bill started the forward propeller, all breathed sighs of relief.

"I reckon it's just as well we kept a watch," Rogers declared.

"If we hadn't we'd have had trouble," Bill told them, "and probably lost the platinum."

"You win," Gordon acknowledged.

"By the skin of our teeth," Bill chuckled.

The weather continued all that they could have asked, and shortly before six o'clock the next afternoon, the Albatross landed just outside San Francisco. They lost no time in finding a place to park the plane for the night and, taking the box with them, they soon were quartered in a small hotel.

"Now, I think it'll be the best plan to sell the stuff to-morrow," Rogers told them as soon as they had reached their room. "If we try to take it home with us we may lose it and we probably can get as good a price for it here as anywhere. What do you think?"

"I think it's a wise plan."

"Then first thing in the morning I'll go to the chief of police and tell him who I am and get him to tell me the best place to take it."

This plan was carried out and before noon they had found a customer in one of the largest jewelry firms of the city. Of course it took some time to make settlement as they had to wait until the platinum was assayed. But the time did not hang heavy on their hands and two days later they received a

check for one hundred and sixty-four thousand dollars.

"Not a bad summer's work," Bill chuckled as they left the office.

"Not half bad," Gordon agreed.

They left for home the next day and two days later the Albatross touched the ground behind the old homestead and two very happy boys received the hearty congratulations of their parents.

"We dropped Steve off on Long Island," Bill told them, "But he's coming to make us a visit next summer."

THE END

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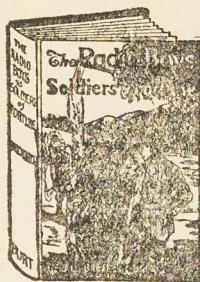
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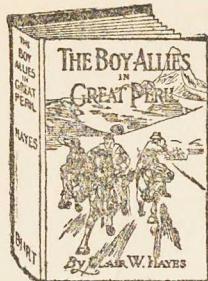
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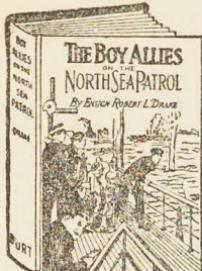
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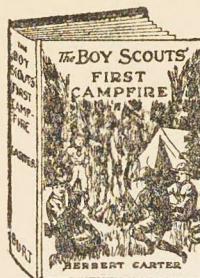
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